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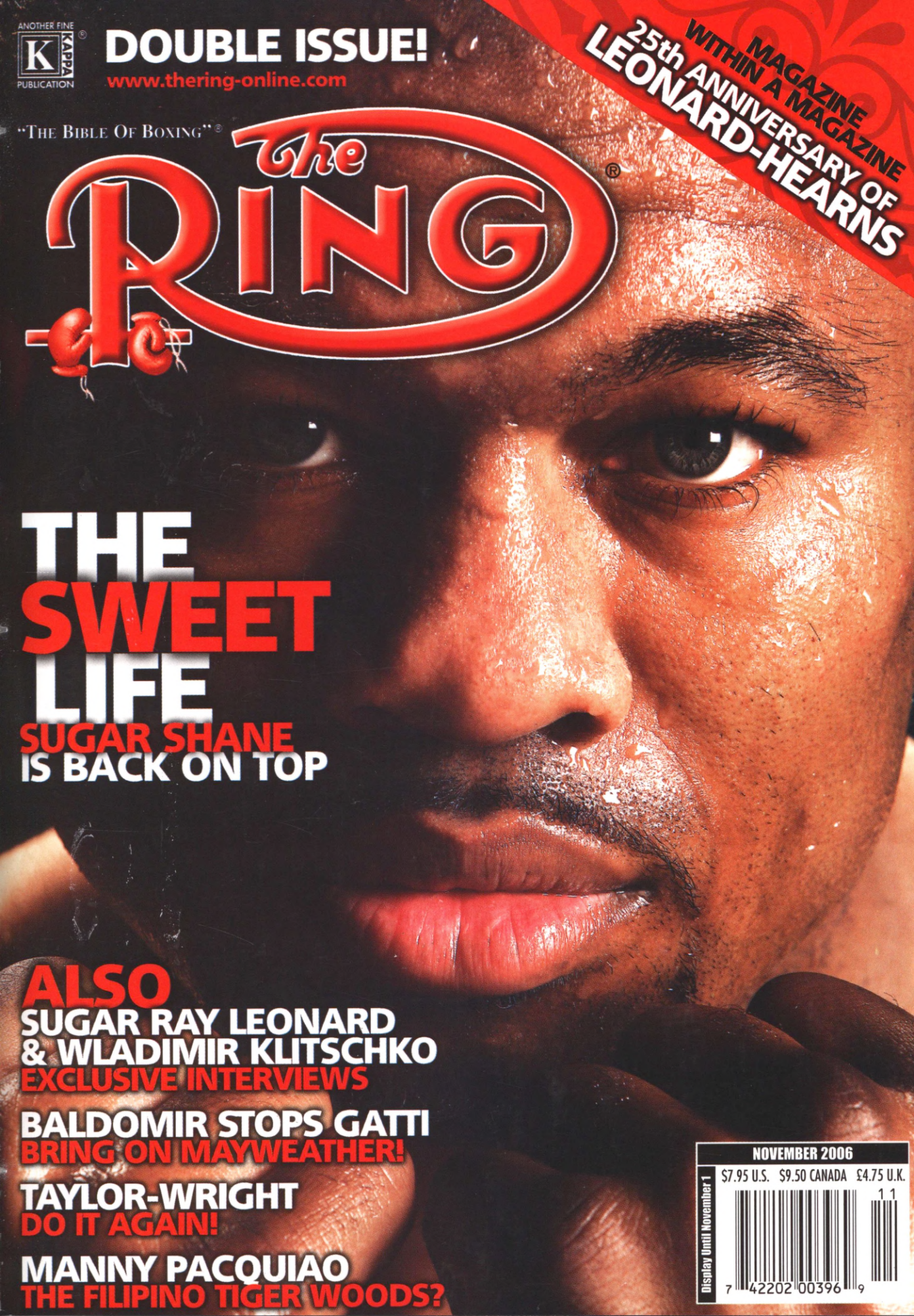

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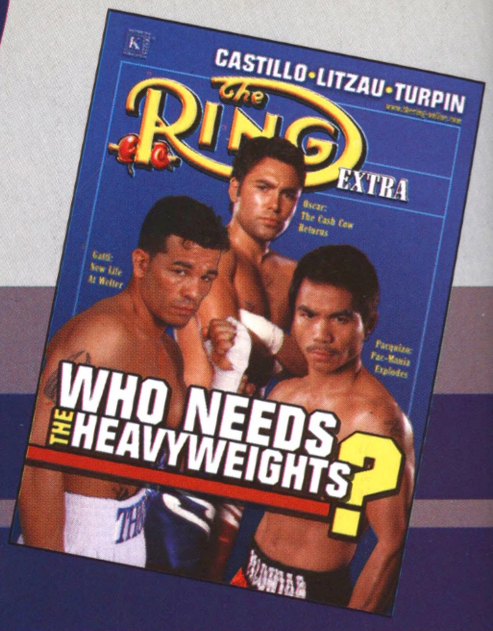

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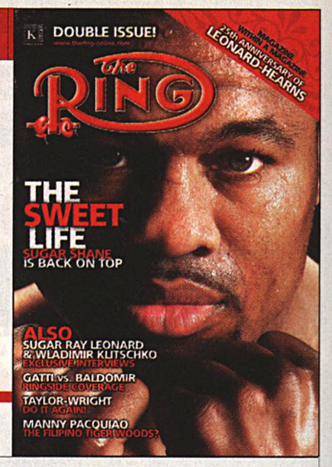

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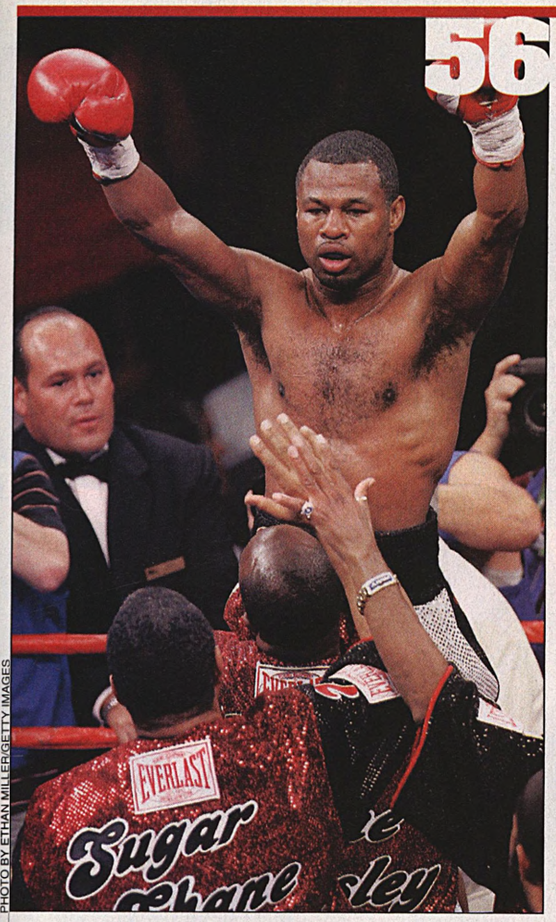

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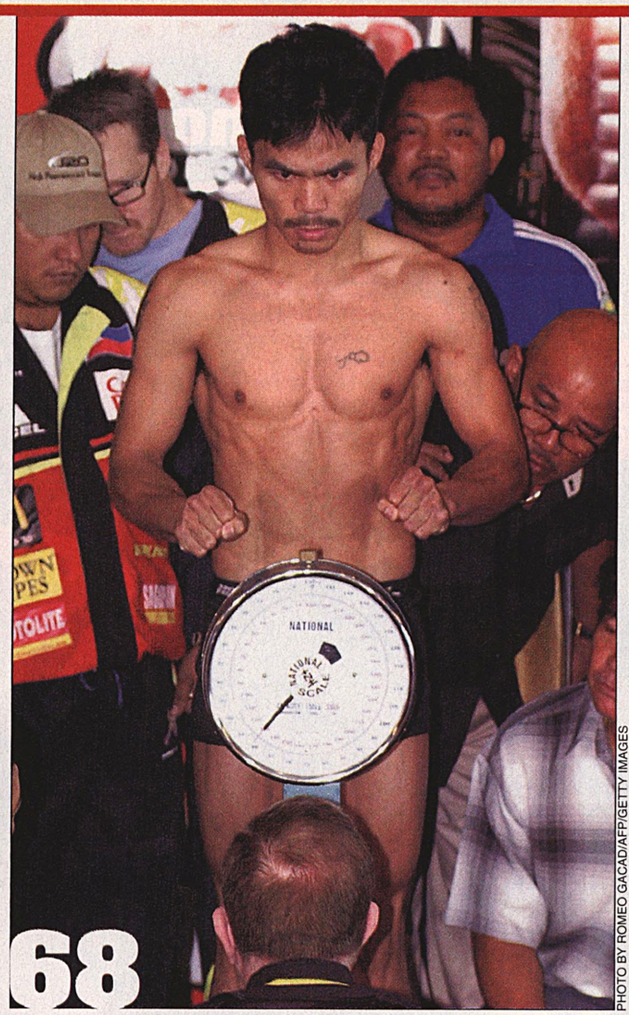

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Opening Shot

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

We wonder whose brilliant idea it was to nickname Dominick Guinn "The Southern Disaster." As it turns out, that pretty much sums up what became of the career of the once-promising heavyweight. Guinn's latest loss, a lopsided 12-round decision, came in June against the largely unheralded Tony Thompson. Maybe things might have turned out differently had Guinn taken a different approach to a nickname, perhaps Dominick "Gunner" Guinn or Dominick "The Destroyer" Guinn. What on earth is a Southern Disaster, anyway? I guess we now know.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Volume 85, No. 10 November 2006

The Ring

I've just watched the double-episode that launched *The Contender*'s second season as prime time fare—and its first on ESPN. The next show won't air until after this issue goes to press, so we'll all know much more by the time you read this.

But I think I'm hooked already.

Even I'm a bit surprised by this turn of events, but something has happened since the show debuted last year on NBC, some sort of involuntary metamorphosis that has gradually transformed me from skeptic into fan.

As an old-school purist, I'm not the sort of guy you'd expect to be a sucker for the sappy family reunions, hackneyed corner advice, and edited fights that are the mainstays of this pugilistic soap opera. But not only do those criticisms seem almost immaterial to me now—a minor price to pay for all that *The Contender* has done for boxing—I've even gotten used to the sight of the fighters wiping far more tears out of their eyes than blood.

The way *The Contender* has humanized the sport and its participants should not be underestimated, and the inroads the first season made into the mainstream were significant enough to push Sergio Mora to the cusp of a world title fight and make minor celebrities of Alfonso Gomez and Peter Manfredo Jr. These are no small accomplishments.

But it's not just the ancillary upside that has made me a fan; I actually like the show. Honest.

When you think about it, it is the staged nature of the show, the very thing that turned off a lot of cynics, that has allowed it to be so entertaining. There's very little Joe Tessitore and Teddy Atlas can do to turn a 10-round clinch-a-thon into a fun fight, but I bet the folks who edit *The Contender* could.

But the ability to manipulate fight sequences is only part of the equation.

Didn't you want more details when the story unfolded, prior to ESPN2's broadcast of the Verno Phillips-J.C. Candello match in April, that the fighters were involved in a personal melodrama worthy of *All My Children*. You remember: Phillips went over to Candello's house to collect some money J.C. had borrowed, and when he didn't get it, he took Candello's dog and allegedly made a pass at his wife for good measure. There wasn't time for more than a few titillating snippets on a fight show, but just imagine what *The Contender* could have done with such a storyline.

And therein lies the beauty of the concept: *The Contender* isn't boxing; it's *about* boxing. This spin allows it to be, if not the best of both worlds, at least a close enough approximation to take advantage of the medium to create something unique in the history of the sport.

Nothing will ever replace the thrill of a great fight, and I'm not in any way suggesting that a reality TV show is better than a traditional fight card. They are two different things altogether and should be appreciated as such. They are not competitors, but rather separate branches of the same root. Ironically, even those who love boxing and hate *The Contender* will benefit from the added exposure and prestige the program brings to the sport.

The secret to survival has always been the ability to adapt to new situations, and boxing is no exception. Like everything else, the fight game has to evolve if it wants to endure, and I believe *The Contender* is part of that natural progression, a new link in a chain that will help carry the Sweet Science deep into the new century.

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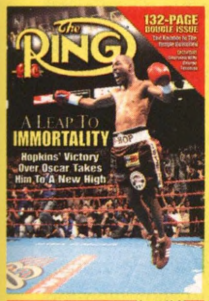

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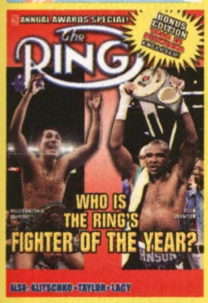

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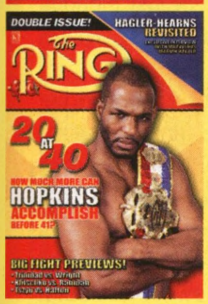

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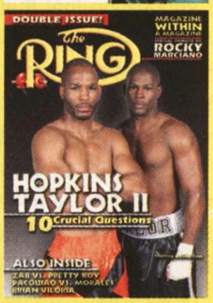

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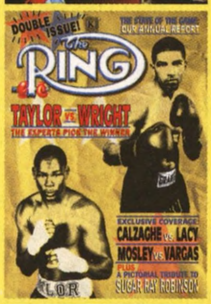
March 2006: Cover Story: Exclusive *Ring* Interview: Marco Antonio Barrera. **Special Bonus Section:** The 10 Fights We'd Like To See. **Also Inside:** Vitali Klitschko, *The Contender,* Roy Jones, Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, Nigel Benn.

May 2006: Cover Story: Forget Judah! It's Time To Bring Hatton And Mayweather Together! **Magazine Within A Magazine:** The Year In Pictures. **Also Inside:** Nicolay Valuev, Ray Mancini, top 10 trainers.



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September 2006: Gold Standard! Oscar's Brilliant Performance A Matchmaker's Dream. **Special Bonus Section:** *The Contender,* Season 2. **Also Inside:** Ricky Hatton, Wladimir Klitschko, Lou DiBella, Floyd Patterson.

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Mesi Mess In Montreal

Another layer can be added to the already controversial return of heavyweight "Baby" Joe Mesi, who insists on continuing his career despite suffering two brain bleeds during his 2004 fight with Vasily Jirov. In June, Mesi not only found a friendly boxing commission north of the border in Montreal, Quebec, for his second comeback bout, he was allowed to use 3-7 (1) local heavyweight Stephane Tessier as the designated fodder.

Mesi was originally slated to face Brazilian Daniel Frank, who was prevented from entering Canada due to visa problems two days before the event.

"I had seen most all of [Tessier's] fights ... and I knew he was not going to get hurt," said Quebec commissioner Mario Latraverse. "I took into consideration that Mesi had not fought in two years. And I was right, because the fight was not one-sided. Mesi won the rounds because of more activity, but at no time was Tessier ever in danger."

Following a recommendation by the Nevada State Athletic Commission, Latraverse said he asked Mesi to come to Montreal for MRI scans before granting the fighter a license to box. Based on feedback from two unaffiliated neurosurgeons, he stated Mesi "passed everything with flying colors; there was no way for us to stop him."

"I don't want to arbitrate this," Latraverse said, referring to the NSAC's standing refusal to license Mesi. "There are two neurosurgeons who have, since then, said he's fit to box, and they know the whole story. They had access to his medical files. Am I going to say, 'No. You're wrong. The [neurosurgeon] in Nevada is right?'"

Ironically, what looked on paper to be an easy six-round fight for Mesi, 31-0 (25), only served to frame his diminished skills. Although outclassed, the portly Tessier landed a number of flush blows and was never in trouble against a slow-handed Mesi.

Afterward, NSAC Medical Advisory board chairman Dr. Margaret Goodman wrote in an Internet article that Mesi's discernibly slower reflexes were evidence of a fighter who has suffered previous brain bleeds. Goodman also noted the presence of neurologist Dr. Robert Cantu in Team Mesi's corner, suggesting that there may be ongoing concern regarding the fighter's health.

"He's a licensed boxing physician, he is very involved in the sport. So that's not the case at all," responded Mesi. The fighter acknowledged Cantu was one of several neurologists sought out for an independent assessment after the NSAC ban, but he subsequently became a close family friend and advisor to Team Mesi.

"We didn't know we were going to be criticized because people think we're concerned," said Mesi. "We just thought he's a great man to have in the corner for a cutman. That's truly the whole reason he is there."

Since a Nevada court lifted his suspension, Mesi said he has fielded numerous offers to fight in the U.S. and overseas, and emphasizes he has not been denied a license by any state he has applied to so far. Although, for now, he has steered clear of the major commissions.

"I haven't applied to Nevada or New York," said Mesi. "I know they are tough states."

Clearly, the 32-year-old Mesi believes he can still fight, but if two documented brain bleeds and an NSAC suspension aren't enough to convince him otherwise, what will it take?

"No doctor ever examined me and said: 'Don't do it,'" claimed Mesi. "But what would it take? The day that I know I am at greater risk than any other fighter, then I won't fight anymore."

It's a day, we can only hope, that will not be filled with regret.

—Paul Salgado

PHOTO BY ERIC NEIL BOLTE

Mesi absorbed some shots in his victory over late sub Tessier

Graveyard Gossip

Oak Hill Cemetery in Neenah, Wisconsin, is the second-oldest municipal graveyard in the United States, and each summer the Neenah Historical Society sponsors a Cemetery Walk that introduces audiences to the famous personages interred there. They include war heroes, politicians, and such titans of industry as John A. Kimberly, whose company has given us such indispensable products as Kleenex, Kotex, Huggies, and Depends. Actors portraying the deceased historical figures dress in costumes and recite scripts telling the touring spectators about their lives.

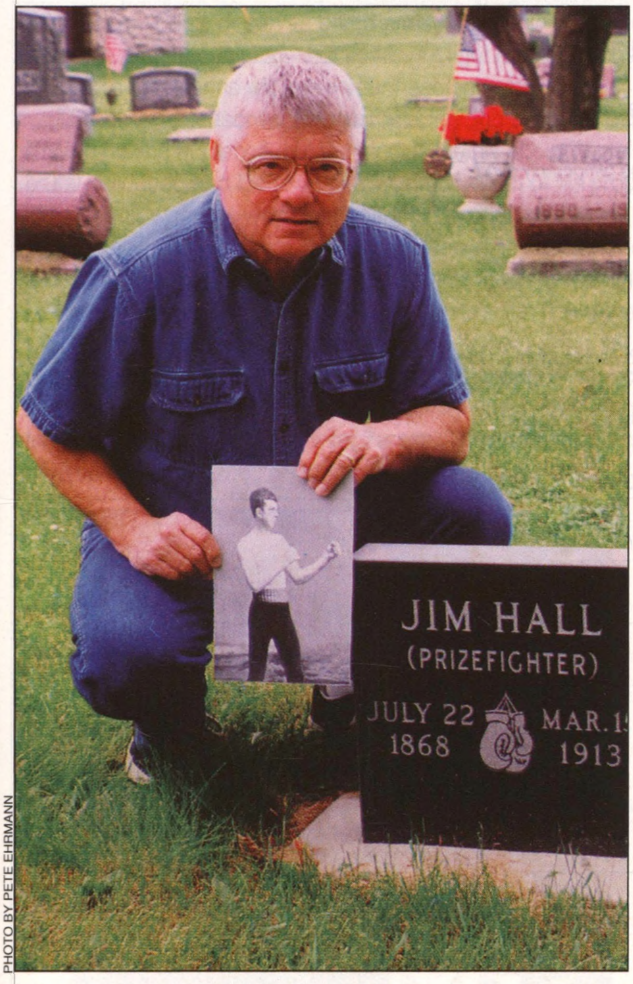


PHOTO BY PETE EHRMANN

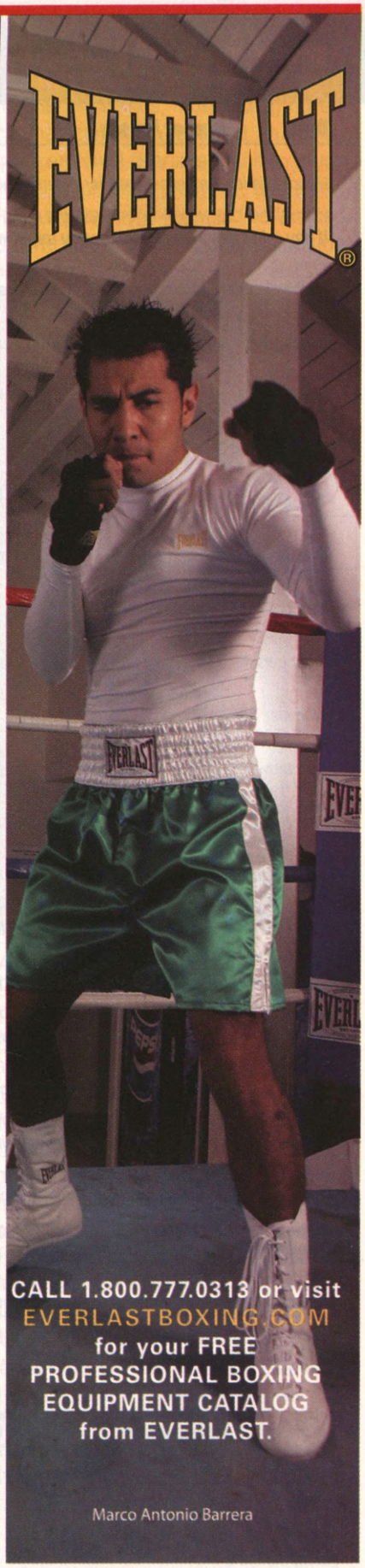
Schutte with Hall's gravestone and picture

Since 2004, one of the most popular stops on the Cemetery Walk has been the grave of famous 19th-century Australian boxer Jim Hall. Using facts mined from newspaper accounts and THE RING, the actor playing Hall tells audiences how he came to the U.S.A. in the 1890s to fight for the middleweight title, but got derailed by Bob Fitzsimmons (who kayoed him in four in 1892) and his own alcoholism. By the end of his life he was so desperate for booze that Hall agreed to sell his skeleton to a Chicago surgeon, post-mortem, for $150. After he'd drunk up the money, Hall tore up the contract and drifted to Wisconsin, where the penniless ex-fighter died of tuberculosis on March 13, 1913. Friends arranged for his burial at Oak Hill, but no headstone marked the grave, possibly to keep the Windy City sawbones from finding and claiming Hall's skeleton.

At this year's Cemetery Walk, the ersatz Jim Hall not only regaled the audience with tales of his pugilistic and boozy feats (they were often combined), but also showed off the new black granite marker purchased recently by Wisconsin ring historian Bill Schutte, who figured that after 93 years it was probably safe for the fighter to come out of hiding.

As grateful as he is for the nice headstone, the ghostly Hall told onlookers, he liked even better what Schutte did when he traveled in May from his home in Whitewater, over 100 miles away, to inspect it—empty the contents of a bottle of wine over Hall's no longer coveted but still mighty thirsty bones.

—Pete Ehrmann



TV Fights of the Month

Date	Winner/Loser	Network	Division	Significance	Matchup	Result
6/16/06	Anthony Peterson W 12 Adan Hernandez	ESPN2	l	C+	B-	C+
Good solid learning experience for Peterson, who needed one like this						
6/17/06	**Jermain Taylor D 12 Winky Wright**	**HBO**	**world m**	**A+**	**A**	**B+**
If you think this was a robbery, you might want to stick to scoring amateur fights going forward						
6/23/06	Joe Mesi W 6 Stephane Tessier	ESPN2	h	C+	D	D
All that time and all that money spent on lawyers and Mesi can't fight at all anymore anyway						
6/24/06	Carlos Quintana W 12 Joel Julio	HBO	w	B	B+	C+
Isn't it great when the guy everyone is raving about gets bumped off? This was fun						
6/24/06	Calvin Brock W 12 Timor Ibragimov	HBO	h	B+	B+	D-
Raise your hand if while watching this you wished you'd go spontaneously and temporarily blind						
6/28/06	Tony Thompson W 12 Dominick Guinn	ESPN2	h	C+	C-	D+
With all Guinn's problems, whose idea was it to put him in with a southpaw?						
6/30/06	Shane Swartz Tech W 5 Dale Brown	ESPN2	c	B-	C+	C-
Tough break for Brown, who's had a career full of them						
6/30/06	Juan Urango W 12 Naoufel Ben Rabah	ESPN2	jw	B+	B-	D
One more like this and Atlas will be the first broadcaster in history to burst into flames while on the air						
7/1/06	Ronald Hearns KO 6 Hector Hernandez	Showtime	m	C	B-	C+
He's no "Hit Man," but Hearns likes to fight and can punch a little; let's see how far he goes						
7/1/06	James McGirt Jr. W 8 Stephan Pryor	Showtime	m	C	B+	C
Pryor gets the chutzpah of the year award for stinking out the joint against McGirt and then calling out Hearns						
7/1/06	Chazz Witherspoon W 10 Michael Alexander	Showtime	h	C	C+	C+
Who else thinks Tim could climb off the couch tomorrow and knock Chazz stiff?						
7/2/06	Manny Pacquiao W 12 Oscar Larios	PPV	jl	A	B-	B
How brave is Erik Morales to want to get in there with Pacquiao again?						
7/5/06	Jerome Ellis KO 6 Neil Sinclair	ESPN2	jm	C+	C+	C
Who has Sinclair been doing sit-ups with, Oscar De La Hoya?						
7/7/06	Joel Casamayor KO 9 Lamont Pearson	ESPN2	l	B-	C-	C-
Okay, was this an off-night for Casamayor, or is he starting the long slide?						
7/8/06	Cory Spinks W 12 Roman Karmazin	Showtime	jm	B+	B	C+
Nice win, Cory; do you want a skirt to go with that postfight interview?						
7/11/06	Ramon Montano W 10 Hector Alejandro	ESPN2	jw	C	B-	B-
Good follow-up win for Montano; how about a rematch now with Salita?						
7/14/06	Freddy Hernandez KO 5 David Toribio	ESPN2	w	C	C	C
Heck of a body shot by Hernandez, who apparently knows how to get rid of a guy who has a good chin						
7/14/06	Jason Litzau KO 1 Nicky Bentz	ESPN2	f	C+	D+	C
Bentz nothing great, but this was a pretty knockout by Litzau all the same						
7/14/06	Carlos Hernandez W 10 Sean Plessis	Telefutura	l	B-	C-	C
Hernandez will always fall short against the elite, but at this level he could go on forever						
7/15/06	Juan Diaz KO 9 Randy Suico	HBO PPV	l	A-	B-	B
Diaz very quietly becoming one of the real consistent, higher-quality young guys in this business						
7/15/06	Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 1 Sod Looknongyangtoy	HBO PPV	jf	B+	B+	B-
If you give Ponce De Leon a target to hit, he's going to hit it; this was nice						
7/15/06	Shane Mosley KO 6 Fernando Vargas	HBO PPV	jm	A	B+	B-
The best Mosley we've seen in a long while, even if the postfight interview was bizarre						
7/19/06	Antonio Mesquita KO 6 Santos Pakau	ESPN2	w	C+	B-	C+
With Mesquita being the kind of puncher he is, it's a good thing they waited for a doctor to show up						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

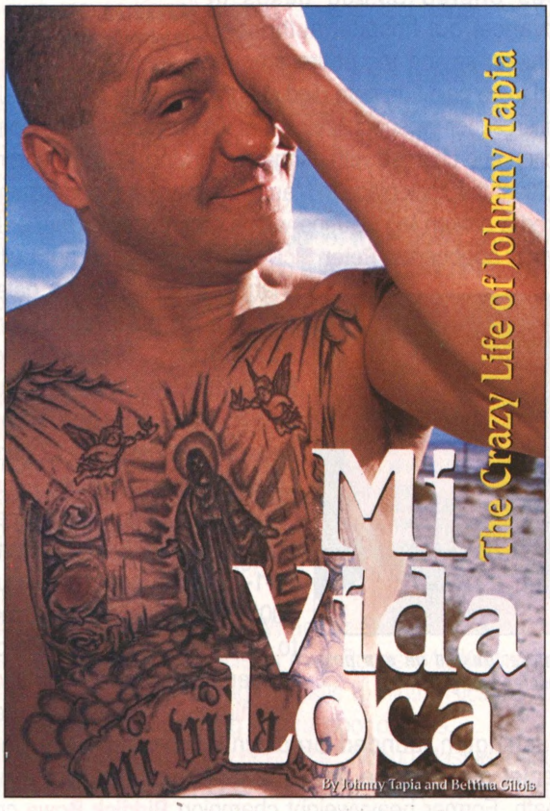
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

Boxing Bookshelf

Mi Vida Loca: The Crazy Life Of Johnny Tapia (Volt Press, 289 pages, hardcover, $24.95) is the best book of its type since Jake LaMotta bared his soul in *Raging Bull*. Tapia, along with co-writer Bettina Gilois, digs deep into his scary past, and the result is a harrowing memoir involving drug addiction, depression, and violence. The story is told at a brisk pace—Gilois deserves some praise for making the tale readable and entertaining—but this is not light reading. Some of Tapia's revelations will leave your head spinning.

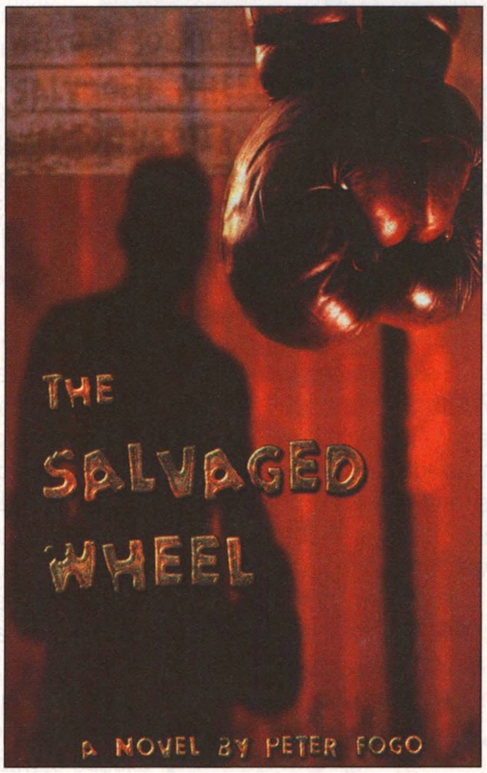
The book is seasoned with just enough ring action to satisfy the boxing audience, but the story is mainly about Tapia's brutal childhood and his struggle with drugs. Most of his problems began when he was eight years old and his mother was murdered under mysterious circumstances. Tapia's extreme sense of "survivor guilt," combined with the "nuclear reactor" he has inside him, is the foundation for a crazy life. In his own words, he's been through more lives than "a hard-living cat." But even at his darkest moments, Tapia's sense of humor and love for life shows through, especially during the chapters about his long suffering wife, Teresa. Their courtship was pure comedy.



Disney Studios is allegedly interested in Tapia's story. This is almost unfortunate news, because we dread seeing Tapia's life given a slick Hollywood treatment. After reading *Mi Vida Loca*, we wouldn't wish anything as trivial as a happy ending on Johnny Tapia. We wish him something better: peace of mind.

—Don Stradley

Aside from the short list of classics, most boxing novels are loaded with stock characters and contrived situations. Pick up any boxing novel and we'll guarantee a bitter young man, a cranky old trainer, a crooked promoter, and a few punch drunk observers. A mystery novelist would be laughed out of the business if he wrote about a chain-smoking



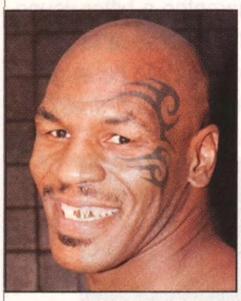
gumshoe in search of a Maltese falcon, but writers still approach boxing with all of the stock characters in mind. Perhaps the clichés of the boxing genre are simply too irresistible. That's the only way we can explain the threadbare stereotypes that inhabit Peter Fogo's *The Salvaged Wheel* (Inkwater Press, $21.95, 182 pages, paperback).

The Salvaged Wheel follows the fictional career of Nick Scalucci, a hard-hearted white heavyweight from Gary, Indiana. Scalucci fights a lot of stiffs, hates his parents, argues with his sweetheart, and hears a lot of insults because of his skin color. Fogo tells the tale from Scalucci's point of view, and since the author chose to make Scalucci an English major, the story is told in a humorless, longwinded voice. The tone doesn't feel right, and the name-dropping of writers such as John Steinbeck and Albert Camus seems out of place too. Fogo probably thought giving his lead character a literary bent would make him more interesting, but having a list of favorite authors isn't enough to give Scalucci any dimension. Throughout the book. he remains unreachable and one-dimensional. By the time you've followed Scalucci down the road to nowhere, you'll wish you read some Steinbeck instead.

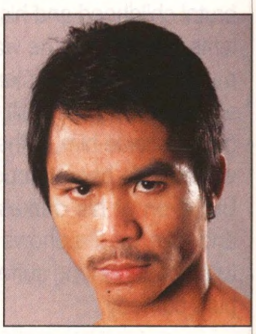
—Don Stradley

Outside the Ropes

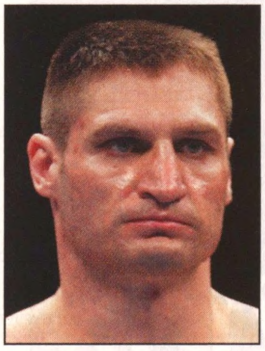
Who said boxing is a dying sport? According to HBO Pay-Per-View, the **Oscar De La Hoya-Ricardo Mayorga** bout racked up even bigger sales than originally estimated. The adjusted figure climbed from 875,000 buys to 925,000, for an approximate PPV gross of $46.3-million ... Boxing writer **Marc Lichtenfeld** hosts a weekly radio show called *Through The Ropes* that airs Thursday nights from 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. ET on 75 affiliates of the Sports Byline network, Sirius Satellite channel 122, and 500 outlets on the American Forces Network ... Former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** has hired Sports Placement Services Inc. to handle his marketing and licensing. The same company also handles **Muhammad Ali, Joe Namath, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Jim Brown,** and **Sandy Koufax** ... New York State Athletic Commissioner **Ron Scott Stevens** has been reappointed for another three years by **Governor George Pataki**. Stevens' new term runs until January 1, 2009 ... The FBI's investigation of **Top Rank**, which lasted more than two years, has ended with no indictments, and Top Rank's chairman of the board couldn't be happier. "All's well that ends well," **Bob Arum** told the *Los Angeles Times*. "I'm not bitter, not angry. In any other country, if the government spent this much time and this much effort, they would find something or created something." Also relieved was junior welterweight journeyman **Verdell Smith**, who appeared before a grand jury in Nevada during the investigation into alleged corruption at Top Rank. "I'm happy the truth came out and their little witch hunt didn't turn out for them," said **Randy Rouse**, who has trained Smith and also employed him as a coach ... **The Nevada State Athletic Commission** has installed some new rules: 1) Lightweights and above will be required to wear 10-ounce gloves instead of 8-ounce gloves. Previously, the cut-off point had been welterweight; 2) At least three doctors will sit at ringside for every fight, instead of two; 3) All fighters will be examined immediately after each bout, prior to leaving the ring or speaking with the media; 4) Certain pint-sized, clear, factory-sealed sports drinks will be allowed in the corner. In addition, starting in January 2007, seconds will have to pass a written test before they are licensed or re-licensed ... Remember **Nongmai Sor Siripron**, the female fighter who was promised her freedom if she could beat **Nanako Kukuchi** in a bout held in a Thailand prison back in November 2005? As reported in the March '06 issue of THE RING, Sor Siripron lost to Kukuchi and stayed behind bars. Well, on June 20 she received a pardon from **King Bhumiphol Adulyadej** and was released ... Philippine national hero **Manny Pacquiao** is contemplating charges against a private hospital in his hometown of General Santos City for allegedly refusing to treat his wife's 22-year-old cousin, **Armando Jamora Jr.**, who was taken to the hospital after developing a high fever. According to Pacquiao, hospital administrators "demanded 50,000 pesos for a down payment. My relatives offered 30,000 pesos in advance, but hospital authorities refused, saying the entire amount had to be paid." Jamora died shortly thereafter ... In late-June, British super prospect **Amir Khan** was arrested at his home in Bolton and charged with dangerous driving, stemming from an incident that took place in March '06 in which a pedestrian suffered a broken leg ... June was a bad month for former Mike Tyson opponents: **Peter McNeely**, 37, pleaded not guilty to charges that he drove a getaway car in a drug store robbery in Stoughton, Massachusetts. Meanwhile, in Chicago, **Andrew Golota** was charged with the unlawful possession of 12 guns ... Louisiana heavyweight **Preston Hartzog**, 29, died of an apparent heart attack on June 21. Hartzog, 15-1-1 (4), last fought on August 5, 2005, losing a six-round decision to **Willie Chapman** ... Beloved trainer and gym owner **George Washington**, 79, died on June 11. Washington founded Brooklyn's New Bed-Stuy Boxing Center and was the driving force behind the gym until his death. Former heavyweight champion **Riddick Bowe** credited Washington with helping keep him from a life of crime. "If I didn't have George with me, I probably would have ended up selling drugs," said Bowe. "But because I had him in my life every day and saw how he lived, I didn't. I just wanted to make him smile" ... Indonesian boxer **Fadly Kasim** died after suffering a sixth-round knockout at the hands of **Jibril Soamole** in Manado, Indonesia, on June 19.



Tyson: Hires marketing company



Pacquiao: May sue over relative's death



Golota: Busted on gun possession charges

Quotable

"I looked around, and it was hard to tell who were the boxers and who were the patients."

—Jin Mosley, wife of Sugar Shane Mosley, recalling a trip she took with her husband and other boxers to visit a convalescent home

"They are just giving Amir dead bodies at the moment, and I think he's had enough easy fights. I know he has to learn, but you learn nothing from fights where you knock a mug out in one or two rounds."

—Former heavyweight contender and Muhammad Ali opponent Henry Cooper, commenting on the way Amir Khan's career is being handled

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended July 23, 2006

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: Carl Thompson (fifth last issue) retired and Dale Brown (seventh last issue) was upset, prompting their departure and some reshuffling. Wayne Braithwaite advances from sixth to fifth, while Pietro Aurino (eighth last issue), David Haye (ninth last issue), and Krzysztof Wlodarczyk (10th last issue) jump two places each. Vadim Tokarez enters at nine and Grigory Drozo debuts at 10.
Light heavyweights: No changes.
Super middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: Javier Castillejo enters at three, after stopping Felix Sturm (third last issue). Sturm falls to fifth, forcing everyone ranked fifth and below to drop one place each. Sergio Mora (10th last issue) exits.
Junior middleweights: Shane Mosley (third last issue) vaults to number one, based on his one-sided TKO of Fernando Vargas (sixth last issue). Cory Spinks enters at two after beating Roman Karmazin (first last issue). Karmazin and Kassim Ouma (second last issue) each fall two places. Everyone ranked fourth and below drops one spot, forcing out Jose Antonio Rivera (10th last issue).
Welterweights: Arturo Gatti (sixth last issue) tumbles down two notches to eighth after being stopped by world champion Carlos Baldomir, which moves Kermit Cintron (seventh last issue) and Oktay Urkal (eighth last issue) up one slot each.
Junior welterweights: Juan Lazcano, moving up from lightweight, debuts at eight, which drops Steve Johnston (eighth last issue) and Souleymane M'Baye (ninth last issue) one rung each. The addition of Lazcano also forces out Juan Urango (10th last issue).
Lightweight: Juan Diaz jumps from third to first following his impressive showing against Randy Suico, while Joel Casamayor (first last issue) slips to second after his so-so win over Lamont Pearson. Juan Lazcano's departure pulls up everyone from fourth and below one place each. Aldo Rios enters at nine and David Diaz debuts at 10.
Junior lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior featherweights: Oscar Larios (second last issue) moves up to junior lightweight, raising everyone ranked third and below last issue up one spot each. Takalani Ndlovu (10th last issue) jumps two places to eighth, thanks to Daisuke Yamanaka's upset over Rikiya Fukuhara (ninth last issue) and Larios' exit. Michael Hunter enters at nine and Yamanaka at 10.
Bantamweights: Wladimir Sidorenko re-enters the rankings at seven based on his decision over Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym (seventh last issue). Kratingdaenggym falls to ninth. Ricardo Vargas (eighth last issue) drops out following several poor outings.
Junior bantamweights: Nobuo Nashiro debuts at two after his 10th-round upset TKO of Martin Castillo (first last issue), which moves Masamori Tokuyama into the top slot. Nashiro's victory also drops Castillo from first to third, forcing everyone third and below one place down. Dimitri Kirilov (rated 10th last issue) exits.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for-pound: No changes.

The RING
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
3. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Jermain Taylor**
   Middleweight
5. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
6. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
7. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight/Welterweight
9. **Jose Luis Castillo**
   Junior Welterweight
10. **Joe Calzaghe**
    Super Middleweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, visit
TheRing-online.com

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended July 23, 2006

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Baldomir retains world welterweight crown after stopping Gatti

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 46-3 (41)
2. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 41-5-2 (33)
3. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-4-3 (43)
4. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-1 (14)
5. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
6. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-6-1 (28)
7. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 39-3-1 (20)
8. **CALVIN BROCK** Charlotte, NC 29-0 (22)
9. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 26-1 (22)
10. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 44-0 (32)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 43-4 (37)
2. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 35-3 (11)
3. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 34-2-1 (21)
4. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 24-2-1 (15)
5. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 31-0 (21)
6. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-4 (30)
7. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 26-4 (22)
8. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-2-1 (31)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 39-10-1 (20)
10. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 30-3-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 37-0-1 (20)
2. **TAKASHI KOSHIMOTO** Japan 39-1-2 (17)
3. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 44-3-1 (33)
4. **HUMBERTO SOTO** Mexico 38-5-2 (22)
5. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-3-1 (18)
6. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 25-2-2 (14)
7. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 32-1 (10)
8. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 24-0-1 (18)
9. **NICKY COOK** England 26-0 (15)
10. **THOMAS MASHABA** South Africa 17-1-4 (10)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 40-3 (30)

1. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 46-1-1 (37)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 24-2 (17)
3. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 27-1-1 (18)
4. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 25-0 (15)
5. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
6. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 22-0 (8)
7. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 29-1 (26)
8. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 26-3 (17)
9. **MICHAEL HUNTER** England 26-0-1 (12)
10. **DAISUKU YAMANAKA** Japan 19-2 (14)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 35-3 (31)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 20-2 (7)
3. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 33-4 (28)
4. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 50-3-2 (35)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 19-1 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-4 (20)
7. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 19-0-1 (6)
8. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 66-9 (43)
9. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGYM** Thailand 24-1 (15)
10. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 32-1 (24)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: O'NEIL BELL
Atlanta, GA 26-1-1 (24)

1. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 33-3-2 (26)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-0 (10)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 32-3 (22)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 45-12-2 (29)
5. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-2 (17)
6. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
7. **DAVID HAYE**
England 17-1 (16)
8. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZK**
Poland 36-1 (27)
9. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 22-0-1 (15)
10. **GRIGORY DROZD**
Russia 24-0 (19)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 47-4-1 (32)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 24-4 (18)
2. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 44-10-2 (29)
3. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 24-0 (15)
4. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-4 (38)
5. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 39-3-1 (24)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 30-0 (21)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 40-3 (24)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 25-2 (18)
9. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 26-2 (13)
10. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 23-0 (15)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 41-0 (31)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 37-0 (28)
2. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-2-1 (13)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 26-3 (20)
4. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 21-3 (19)
5. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 21-1 (17)
6. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 20-5 (18)
7. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 23-0 (17)
8. **MGER MKRTCHIAN**
Armenia 23-2 (17)
9. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 16-0 (15)
10. **CARL FROCH**
England 19-0 (15)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 25-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 50-3-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 21-0 (17)
3. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 61-6 (41)
4. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 32-8 (13)
5. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 25-2 (11)
6. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 26-0 (23)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 18-0 (14)
8. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 21-1 (9)
9. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-2 (13)
10. **SCOTT DANN**
England 24-2 (17)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CARLOS BALDOMIR
Argentina 43-9-6 (13)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 36-0 (24)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 33-4 (24)
3. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
4. **RICKY HATTON**
England 41-0 (30)
5. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-2 (12)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 26-1 (24)
7. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 37-3 (11)
8. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 40-8 (31)
9. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
Washington, D.C. 57-5 (30)
10. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 30-0 (22)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 41-0 (30)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 27-0 (22)
2. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 54-7-1 (47)
3. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 33-1-2 (19)
4. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-3 (16)
5. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2-1 (17)
6. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 31-4-1 (17)
7. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 43-8-1 (28)
8. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 36-3-1 (27)
9. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
Vero Beach, FL 39-3-1 (18)
10. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 34-1 (19)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-3 (33)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 30-0 (15)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 33-3-1 (21)
3. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 33-3 (24)
4. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 38-1 (32)
5. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-2 (16)
6. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-3 (29)
7. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
South Africa 25-0 (9)
8. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Lincoln Heights, CA 23-1 (13)
9. **ALDO RIOS**
Argentina 41-4 (9)
10. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 31-1-1 (16)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 42-3-2 (32)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 62-4 (42)
3. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-4 (34)
4. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-1-1 (12)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 46-2-1 (33)
6. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 26-2 (19)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 46-3-1 (37)
8. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-6-1 (24)
9. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 23-1 (17)
10. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 25-0 (17)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 32-3-1 (8)
2. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 8-0 (5)
3. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-2 (16)
4. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 24-1 (15)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 32-2-1 (24)
6. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-2 (26)
7. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 30-4 (20)
8. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 28-3 (18)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 23-2 (10)
10. **GERRY PENALOSA**
Philippines 50-5-2 (33)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 62-2 (32)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 27-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 26-0 (21)
4. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 44-3-1 (34)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 21-0-2 (15)
6. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 20-1 (7)
7. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 28-3-1 (13)
8. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 39-14-3 (22)
9. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 33-1-1 (25)
10. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 29-2-2 (19)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 22-1 (17)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 23-3-1 (17)
3. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 23-2-2 (13)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 22-1-1 (16)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-0 (12)
6. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-3-1 (7)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-5-1 (20)
8. **NOBUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 22-3-1 (3)
9. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 25-5 (14)
10. **MUVHUSO NEDZANANI**
South Africa 15-1-3 (9)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 26-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 20-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 51-7-4 (23)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 16-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 17-2 (7)
6. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 20-3-1 (16)
7. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-3-1 (10)
8. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 36-4-1 (30)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 22-1 (17)
10. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-8-3 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

Momma Said There'd Be Daze Like This?

Bernard Hopkins doesn't think it's that easy, does he? He doesn't *really* believe he can move up from middleweight to capture the light heavyweight title (something Sugar Ray Robinson couldn't do), prove to the doubters that he's still got more left in those old bones than just a symphony of snaps, crackles, and pops, take his bows, get his hardware engraved, and then march off into retirement like some jaded lunch-pail-lugger waving a permanent goodbye to the assembly line at the Ford Motor Company.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

A Hopkins-Calzaghe match would be huge in the U.K.

"I'm done," Hopkins said after surprising most of us with a one-sided (he won 10 of 12 rounds on all three cards) upset decision over Antonio Tarver in June. "I don't need to risk anything else. There's nothing else to do. I want to see my daughter, and I want to know who her teachers are."

Okay, let's take those statements one by one. He doesn't need to risk anything else? With his defensive ability, what has he ever risked? Even at the usually decrepit age of 41, "The Executioner" could stand in front of an exploding hand grenade and block some of the shrapnel with his left hand, deflect more of it with his right, and duck whatever was left. Heck, he could be saddled with *Jay Leno's* chin and he'd still be hard to hit.

There's nothing else to do? Has Hopkins looked in the direction of the British Isles, where a shootout with undefeated super middleweight ruler Joe Calzaghe could probably jam Wembley Stadium? Has Hopkins considered dropping back to 160 pounds for a chance to meet Mr. (Winky) Wright? Let's not forget that there's also the possibility of a rematch

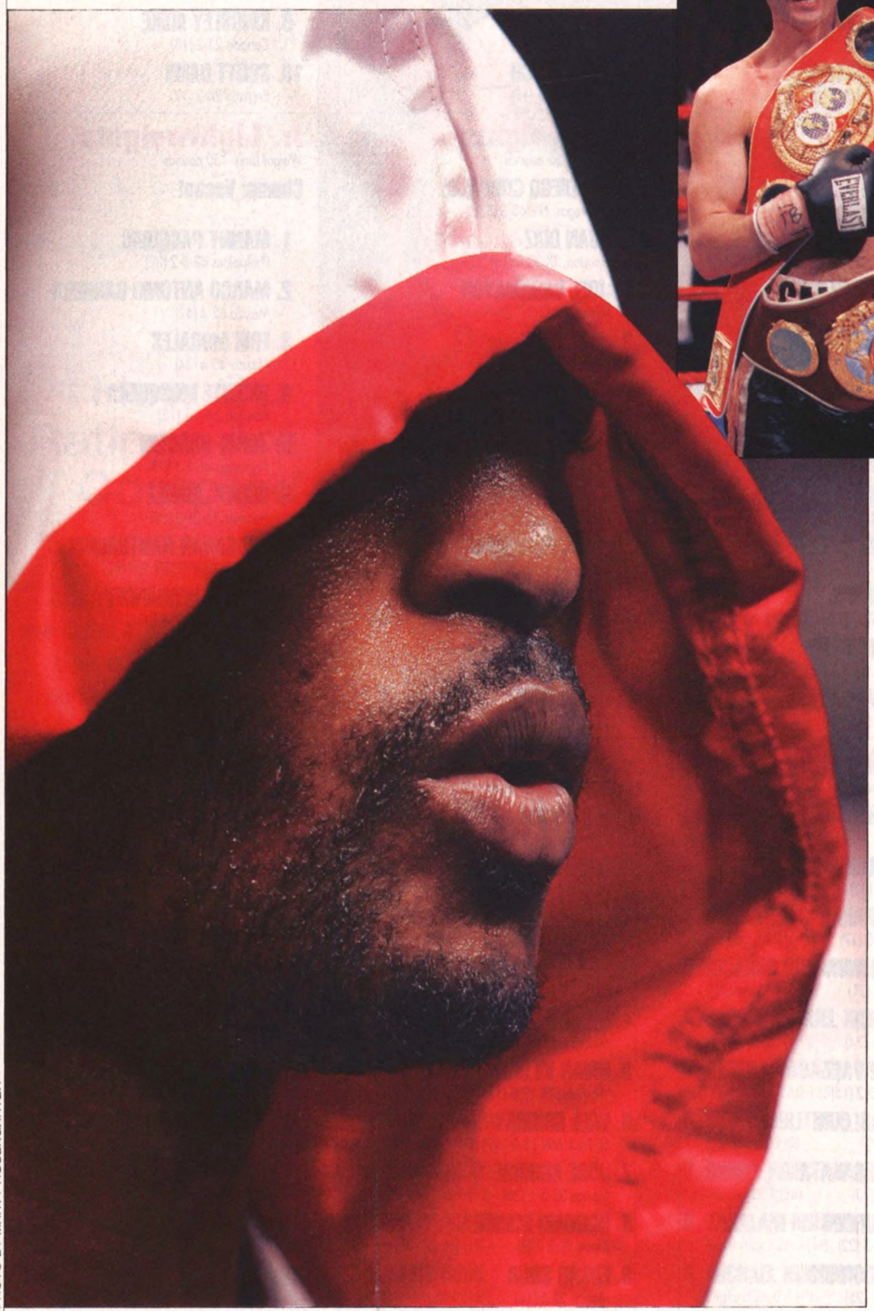


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Is Hopkins really ready for the rocking chair?

with Roy Jones, if for no other reason than to clear up a blemish that's been staining Hopkins' record for the past 13 years.

As for Hopkins wanting to see his daughter, well, that's why they invented camcorders and digital photos, for goodness sake.

No, Hopkins shouldn't be allowed to just leave us this way. Yeah, yeah, we know he made that promise to his mother before she passed away, the one about not fighting past the age of 40. Well, he's already broken that one. If Mom is looking down, she'll certainly forgive him for carrying on in light of the spanking he gave Tarver. Particularly because The Executioner has plenty of legitimate reasons for continuing his career:

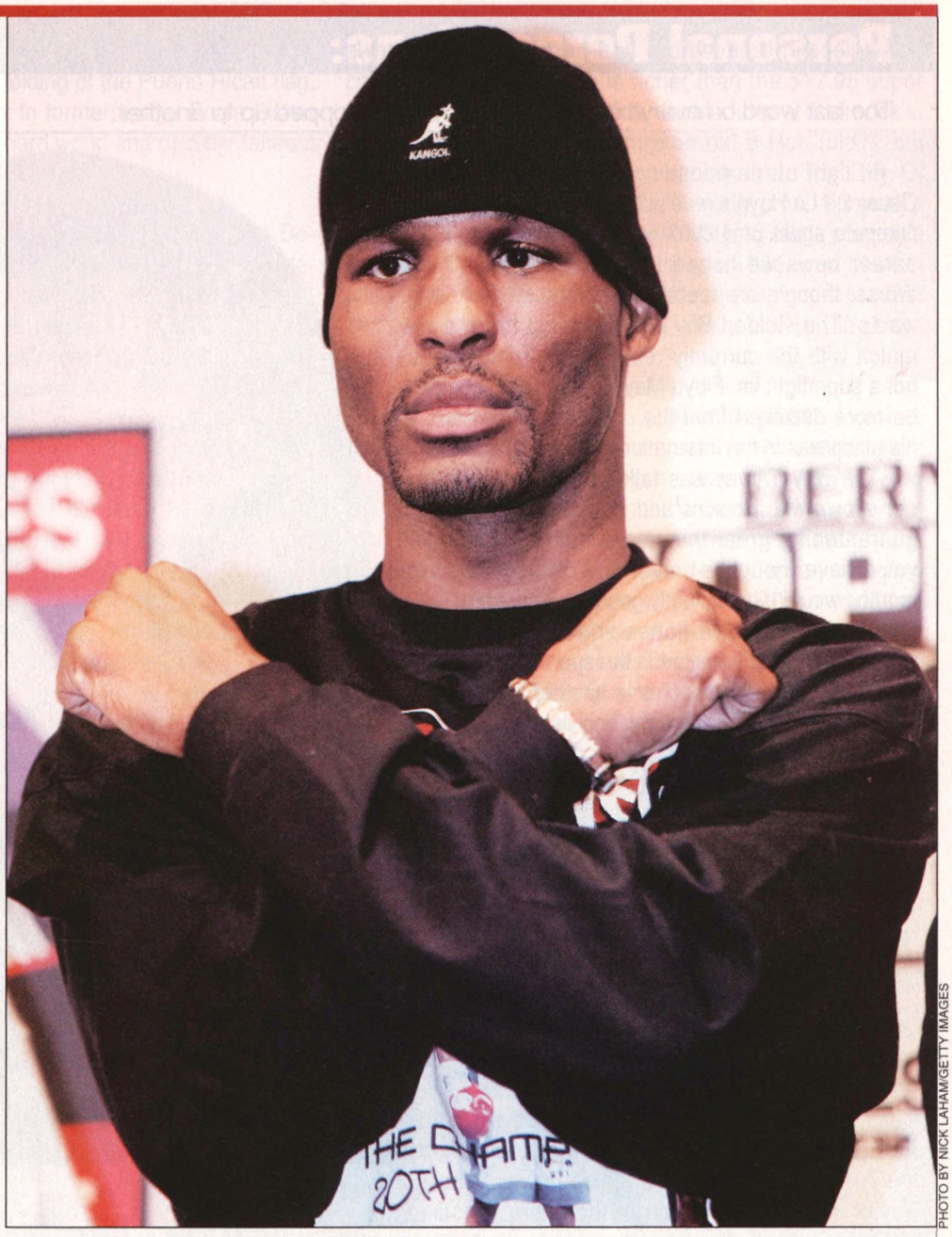


PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Boxing needs more macho nicknames such as "The Executioner"

•Nobody retires on top: After Rocky Marciano did it and screwed up everything from the believability of *Requiem For A Heavyweight* to the clichéd sob-story columns every big-name sportswriter had written-and-ready-to-go in his desk drawer, Congress passed the Tarnished Achievements Act, which mandates that a former world champion's last career bout must be a) a defeat, b) a truly humiliating ass-kicking, or c) a performance so unbelievably sad that it makes you wonder how the guy ever got fitted for a mouthpiece at any time in his life, let alone a title belt.

•Sympathy for The Ring: Though this magazine's Championship Policy has taken hold in several corners of the sport, its list of world champions still reveals more vacancies than a motel with bed bugs, dirty linens, and a double-amputee mime headlining in the lounge. Hopkins wouldn't dare force his good buddies at "The Bible Of Boxing" to clamor for a Glen Johnson-Zsolt Erdie bout to fill the throne, would he?

•Keeping a great nickname alive: Is it me, or have boxing nicknames gone softer than James Toney's internal oblique muscle? Where the fight game once had "The Brockton Blockbuster" and "Hands Of Stone" and "The Hit Man," it now boasts "Pretty Boy" and "The White Wolf" and "The Next Generation." Oh, brother. Hopkins has to stick around if for no other reason than we need an Executioner in our midst, especially one who likes to run his finger across his throat to send a message to the condemned (a gesture even the NFL has banned). What's, say, The Next Generation going to do to get everyone riled? Taunt the opponent by unfurling a poster of his family tree?

•The wrinkled and Rogained need a hero: There just aren't any other pro athletes on Hopkins' side of 40 that make us proud to be middle-aged. The Giants' Barry Bonds is in decline and impossible to cheer. The Mets'

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from one guy who mopped up to another:

•In light of his pounding of Ricardo Mayorga, Oscar De La Hoya's revelation that he's not going to compete again until 2007 wasn't exactly the kind of career news we hoped to be hearing from him. Worse, though, are reports that promoter Don King wants "The Golden Boy's" next outing to be a rematch with the currently retired Felix Trinidad and not a superfight vs. Floyd Mayweather. King couldn't be more detached from the public and its wishes if his office was in the International Space Station.

•The way Tarver was talking smack before his showdown with Hopkins and Paulie Malignaggi was guaranteeing great things against Miguel Cotto, you'd have thought at least one of those two big mouths would have actually gone out and won.

•You know you've gotten your butt busted up when the beating transcends the sport and becomes a one-liner for the wiseacres in another line of work. When New York Giants tight end Jeremy Shockey sported a black eye at his team's mini-camp, he denied that he'd been beaten up in a fight and explained that he'd suffered the injury while working out with weights. "I'm not Tarver," he said. Ouch.

•Some of us feel very old when we realize that Mike Tyson, the youngest heavyweight king in history, turned 40 on June 30. Some of us also thought we'd never see "Iron Mike" make it to 40.

•Taylor and his promoter, Lou DiBella, deserve credit for selecting Hopkins and Wright for back-to-back title defenses, but the champion didn't look great in either of them. You watch another Taylor close-call distance fight, and it's hard to believe that he's guardian of a division that was once ruled by the likes of Zale, Graziano, LaMotta, and Hagler. Taylor reminds me of one of those pro wrestling champs who always manages to keep his belt on a countout or some other technicality, but never dominates.

•You just have to love boxing, where a guy like Cory Spinks can prove himself worthy of a title—the IBF junior middleweight belt he lifted from Roman Karmazin—but not worthy of a title *shot*. Spinks "earned" his crack at the crown by getting knocked out by Zab Judah and then not fighting for 17 months. Only in Alphabet Land.

•Upon the passing of former baseball umpire Eric Gregg recently, the *New York Post* ran a column calling him "the most recognizable game official working any sport in this country [during] the last 25 years of the last century." Hey, anybody ever hear of Mills Lane?

•Just read that Cory's pop, former heavyweight titlist Leon Spinks, is working as a janitor at a YMCA in Columbus, Nebraska. This is probably none of my business, but if Michael Spinks made all of that money in *his* career, and by all accounts is set for life, how can he allow his brother to wipe down a men's room and sweep up discarded sweat socks?

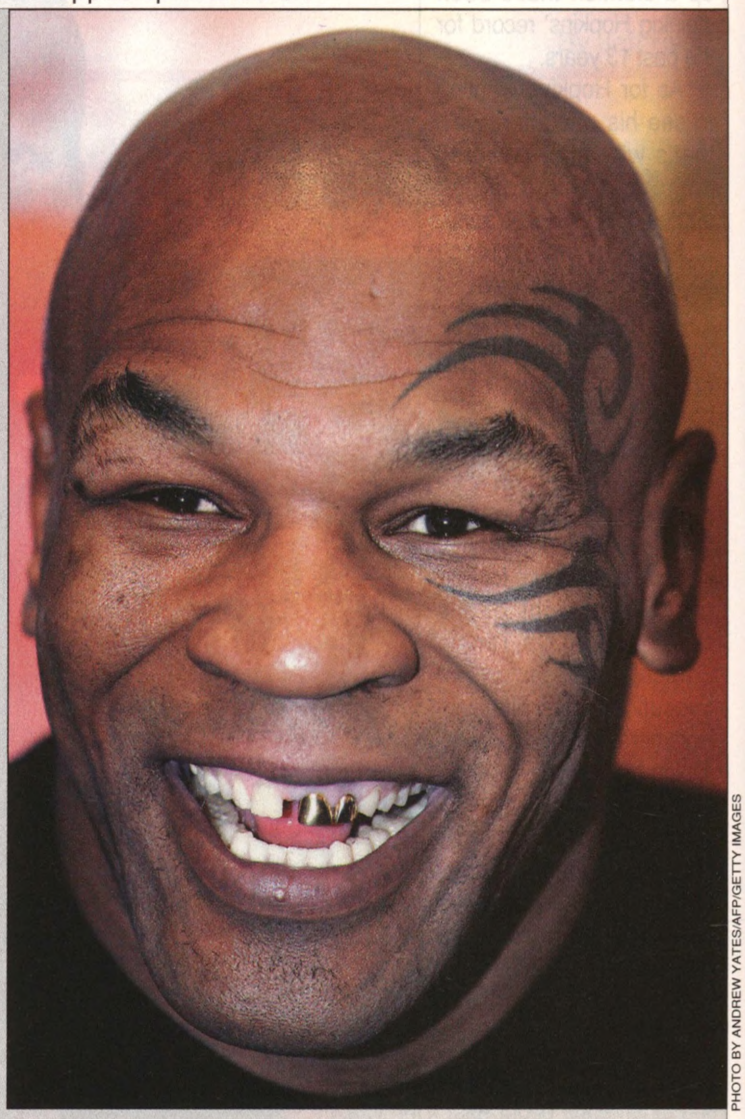


PHOTO BY ANDREW YATES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Happy 40th birthday, Mike

Julio France is 47, but he's a part-timer. Hopkins, however, is a guy who doesn't just exist at fortysomething, but actually *excels*. And if you're someone who needs reading glasses to make out the words on this page, you know just how much that means to us dinosaurs.

•Keeping up with the Joneses: Though he'll never admit it, how much does Hopkins want to retire without having ever avenged the loss to Jones? Uh, it's safe to say that he wants Jones one up on him about as much as he wants to a) be interviewed once again by Larry

Merchant on the subject of the Morrade Hakkar bout, b) take a lesson in the proper folding of the Puerto Rican flag, c) mail a hefty bonus check to former trainer Bouie Fisher as a thank you for all of his hard work, and d) order takeout from the kitchen at Graterford Prison.

•He's a living, breathing textbook: Defense used to be considered a lost art. After Hopkins departs, though, the police will be calling off the Amber Alert and giving up the search completely. Head feints. Slipping punches. Changing angles. Countering. Judging by their styles, some fighters must think those moves are illegal.

•Rocky VII: Tarver plays the role of Rocky Balboa's foe in *Rocky VI*, and, hopefully, the former champ acted more like a fighter in the film than he did against Hopkins. When the inevitable *Rocky VII* is eventually cast, "B-Hop" deserves to at least read for the role of Apoplectic Creed, the guy who dukes it out with Rickety Balboa when the two men can't reach agreement on who gets the last spoonful of Metamucil at their Florida nursing home.

•Civic pride: Hopkins may live in suburban Delaware, but he trains in and represents Philadelphia, a city whose fistic tradition is richer than the $17.95 super mocha chocolatta loco cocoa double latte at Starbuck's. Not to put any added pressure on old B-Hop (old?), but he's the only thing close to a winner that "The City Of Brotherly Chokers" has had in a long time. Football's Eagles last won a world championship in 1960, hockey's Flyers in 1975, baseball's Phillies in 1980, and basketball's 76ers in 1983. Hopkins' last world title came in June. Without Hopkins on the scene, Philly is just Cleveland with a cracked bell.

•He's Jermain to Taylor's plot: If anyone should beg Hopkins to stick around, it's the middleweight king. Taylor was fortunate to get a draw with Wright, not to mention lucky to earn the nod in his first meeting with Hopkins. As a matter of fact, after three title fights, Taylor hadn't impressed anyone. When Hopkins beat Tarver, though—presto!—Taylor's two close wins over B-Hop suddenly seemed much more impressive. So what's the best thing Taylor can do to enhance his image? Thrash Wright in a rematch? Shut out Felix Sturm? Blast out Arthur Abraham? No, it's probably to have Hopkins beat Calzaghe. ■

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

B-Hop displays perfect technique while landing a right

By Ivan Goldman

Homage To Hopkins

I'm taking Bernard Hopkins at his word that Antonio Tarver was his last opponent. And as he advised Larry Merchant at the end of the fight, it's time to say something to mark the milestone.

Philly guys Hopkins and Merchant in some ways mirrored the relationship of Muhammad Ali and Howard Cosell. They were harnessed together and not always happy about it. Remember the time Ali plucked Cosell's hairpiece off his head? Hopkins and Merchant could never achieve such a defining moment because Merchant grows his own. But they sure had their moments.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL W. HEAYN

Goldman says Hopkins is the best since Ray Leonard

At the end of the first round, ace trainer Buddy McGirt instructed Tarver to jab Hopkins in the chest. Later on, he said aim for the shoulder. Later still, he said hit his arms. Why not tag him in the kisser or the breadbasket? Because McGirt recognized early on that Tarver, though getting nailed himself, couldn't catch Hopkins clean. At least hit *something* was what McGirt meant, but he was too smart to damage Tarver's already-wrecked confidence with unadorned truth.

I was among those deluded beings who expected 41-year-old Hopkins to fight dangerous Tarver too cautiously and infrequently, giving us another one of the tedious contests he'd been staging in his declining years. I'm delighted I guessed wrong. B.H. loved the sport and its history too much to go out scamming the fans, and he gave us a show instead.

During his 18 years as a pro, Hopkins had four losses on paper, but the only man who really got to him inside those ropes was referee Mills Lane. That was seven years ago, when Lane accidentally shoved him out of the ring during his first battle with Robert Allen.

As he grew older, the fierce, brawling Hopkins established a smoother, trickier style (much like Marco Antonio Barrera did) to better protect himself and keep winning. He held the championship 10 years, ducking no one as new middleweight contenders raised their heads. Along the way, he kayoed Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya and, for dessert, polished off the light heavyweight champion.

For much of his career, media and fan attention was elsewhere, but Bernard Hop-

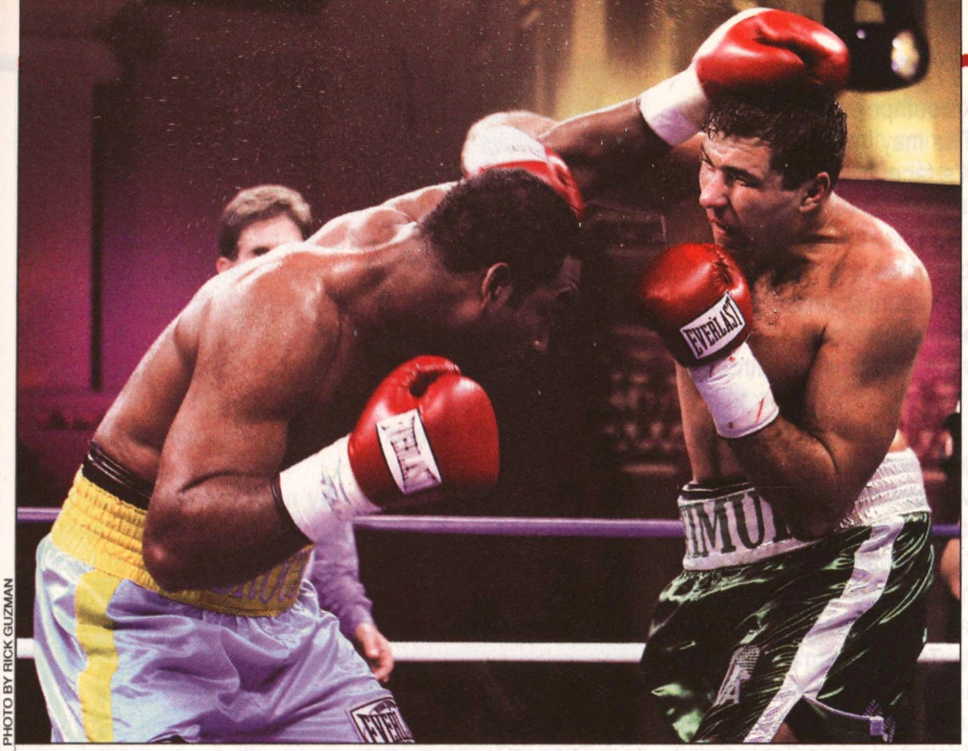


PHOTO BY RICK GUZMAN

Brock needs to be more exciting

kins proved himself one fight at a time as the best of our time—better than Mike Tyson, Roy Jones, Julio Cesar Chavez—the greatest fighter since Sugar Ray Leonard.

Brock's No Ace: You have to play the cards you're dealt, and Calvin Brock is a pair of sixes in a game of five-card stud. Sixes take pots only against weak hands and weak players. Remind you of today's heavyweight division? To put it another way, in the land of the blind, a one-eyed man is king.

Brock's decency, intelligence, and undefeated record speak well for him, but it's hard to see Mr. and Mrs. Livingroom getting excited over a plodding fighter whose outings look more like sparring matches than fights. Fans who watched him against Zuni Lawrence in February saw a spectacular sixth-round kayo, but the previous rounds were like digging your car out of the snow. The thrill of finally getting on the road is great, but it can't erase the drudgery that preceded it.

In his next outing, in June, Brock came out strong against undefeated Timor Ibragimov, and it was a much better fight—the first few rounds. But then Brock lost his fire and settled in to win rounds that were only slightly more exciting than badminton. Sure, Ibragimov gets some of the blame, but to get the big bucks, fighters have to destroy whatever's in front of them. HBO may be due some credit for trying to stir up excitement in the heavyweight division, but the forecast for Brock's drawing power is not sunny.

Carlos Who?: On the other hand, the Brock-Ibragimov co-feature provided fans with an excellent match and a surprise ending, showcasing a lesser-known welterweight who was supposed to get his butt kicked by heavy-handed Joel Julio.

HBO had burgled rising star Julio from Showtime and figured to build him big. After all, fans love a knockout artist, which Julio, 27-1 (24), most assuredly is. But the conventional wisenheimers neglected to consult Carlos

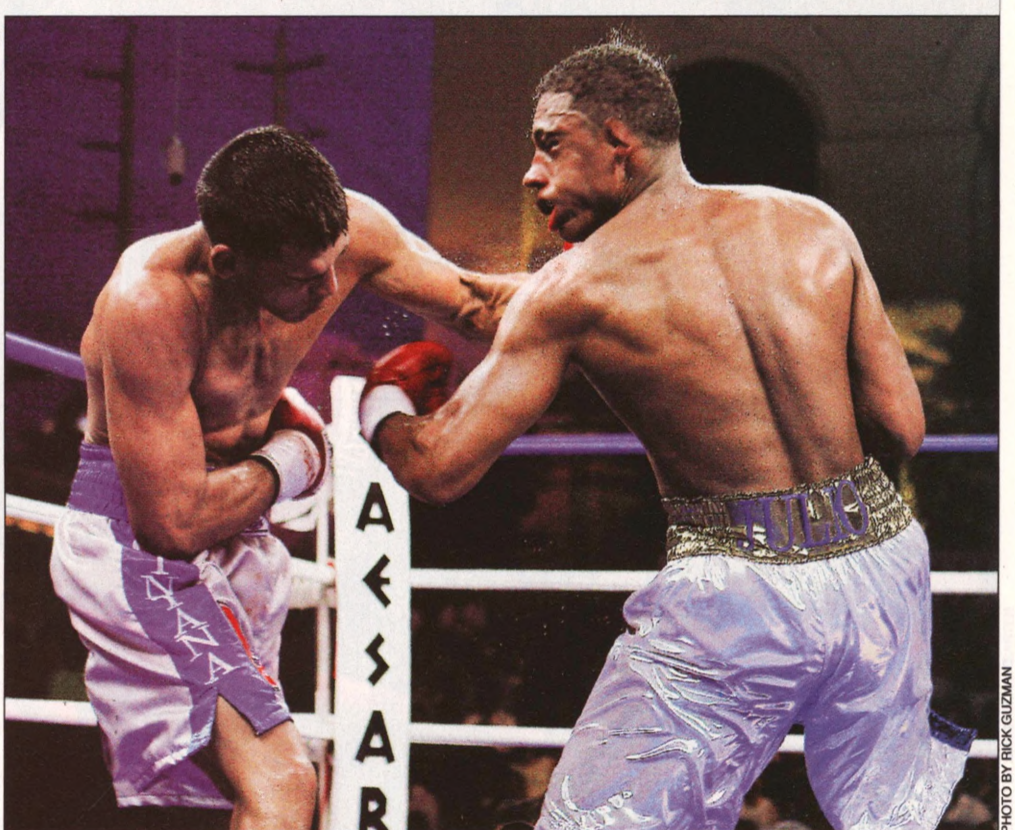


PHOTO BY RICK GUZMAN

Quintana (left) made a fan of Goldman

Quintana, 23-0 (18), the slick southpaw who gave Julio such a severe boxing lesson. This may have been a happy surprise for HBO, because, let's face it, you can get way more fan traction building a Puerto Rican (Quintana) than a Colombian (Julio).

Quintana sure made a fan out of me. He keeps moving but doesn't run, and he's a terrific counterpuncher. Crowd-pleaser Julio may someday learn to deal with the Carlos Quintanas of this world. But I wouldn't put him in with Floyd Mayweather anytime soon.

Taylor On The Rise: If you recall his first fight with Hopkins, Jermain Taylor was so helpless on the inside he actually turned his back a couple of times. Against Winky Wright, Taylor's inside game was less embarrassing, but he had no strategy on the ropes. You'll often see an experienced fighter with his back to the ropes suddenly spin around and turn the tables. Taylor doesn't know how. On the other hand, he did an awful lot of good things against Wright. That includes scoring solid right hands right through his gloves—no easy feat. And when Taylor's left eye closed after a clash of heads, he treated the injury as no big deal. He came to fight, not dance.

He's already 27, but Taylor is still green. What's important is that he's tough, diligent, and talented. Fighting both Hopkins and Wright to a standstill is no walk in the park. Give him another year or two training with Manny Steward and he's going to be one seriously bad dude.

Winky was certain even before he entered the ring that he would get jobbed, so he was quick to believe it happened. But the scores were legit, and a draw was fair. No Magoo. The accomplished Winky could stop worrying about scores if he took more chances in there. His last stoppage was over Jason Papillion in February 2002.

What Went Right: By now everybody has beat up on Jose Luis Castillo and his incompetent team of louts and liars. They bring to mind the words of lawyer Joseph Welch, when, over 50 years ago, he asked sociopath Senator Joe McCarthy, "Have you no sense of decency, sir?"

But at least there was something positive that came out of Castillo's failure to make weight for his third bout with Diego Corrales—the opportunity to give out Futch awards. I know that's not exactly a worthy substitute for the fight thousands of fans traveled to Las Vegas to see.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Taylor's inside game is improving

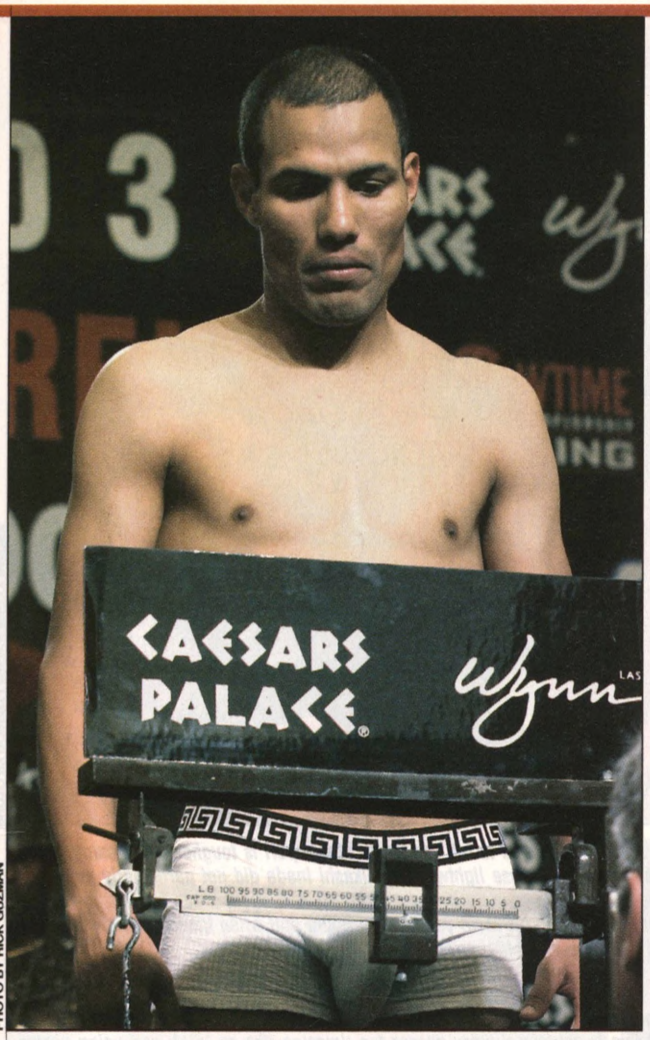


PHOTO BY RICK GUZMAN

Castillo weighs in for a fight that never happened

But, hey, to paraphrase a not-so-great military leader, you go to press with the facts you have, not the ones you want. The first award goes to Corrales' trainer, Joe Goossen. Teams live off that purse along with the fighters. When Castillo stepped off the scale nearly five pounds over the limit, Joe, who'd put in all those brutal hours preparing his game fighter for a brutal fight, immediately told him, it's a marked deck, and your safety is at stake. Walk away from the table. And his promoter, Gary Shaw, who'd promised to call it off if Castillo pulled any more scale games, kept his word.

Castillo's promoter, Bob Arum, may have been victimized along with Diego, his team, the fans, Showtime, the hotel, and everyone else connected to this debased spectacle. When the lawsuits are through flying around, Arum may lose even more.

Of course, everyone's still wondering why two guys who walk around at 150 or more were supposed to make weight at 135. Meanwhile, the same failed weigh-in rules are still in force.

No matter how you set rules, somebody stretches, pulverizes, or gets around them to win an unfair advantage. If we switch to weighing fighters just before the fight, they'll go in dangerously dehydrated as they try to shrink themselves into a match with a smaller man. Of course, since both fighters will do this, they will both suffer, and the advantage will be gone.

Maybe commissions will have to establish some far-out formula involving electrolytes, calculus, and logarithmic measurements. But that might give an advantage to those fight teams that have sufficient cash to hire private squads of evil scientists to beat the new regulations.

Our ongoing weight game in boxing is quite similar to the U.S. income tax game that makes the world's most unwieldy tangle of coat hangers look perfectly organized. If we really want to inform future beings what became of our civilization, we ought to put the entire IRS code in a time capsule. *Aha*, they'll exclaim. *Now we see what happened. They went nuts.* And just for laughs, we ought to throw in a copy of Nevada weigh-in rules plus a video of Don and Carl King explaining how they divide their fighters' purses.

Magoo: To the Department of Homeland Security, which views Jorge Paez Jr. as such a grave threat to our safety that it barred him from entering the U.S. to fight Armand Horn. With watchdogs like these we might as well put the cash and silverware out on the curb. ■

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Paez Junior: Turned back at the border

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY SANDRA BEHNE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

How do you say, "Get a room!" in German? Super middleweight contender Mario Veit gets it on with his girlfriend after a recent win over Juergen Brahmer, proving that to the victor do indeed go the spoils. But just imagine the action he'd be getting if he'd won a real title, instead of just the WBC International super middleweight belt. If he beat Joe Calzaghe for THE RING title, the in-ring celebration would probably supplant the Paris Hilton video as the most downloaded clip on the Internet.

PHOTO BY ROBERT LABERGE/GETTY IMAGES

The next time anyone tries to tell you some other sport is tougher than boxing, show them this picture. Japanese lightweight Chikashi Inada did not particularly enjoy this 60-second break between rounds, most of which was spent bleeding and howling in pain. From the look on his face, you have to figure that when Inada's mouthpiece was removed, half the teeth in his mouth came with it.

Before you go thinking, There's another crazy boxing fan dressing like an idiot, please note that this is actually a crazy soccer fan dressing like an idiot, and using boxing props to complete his costume. This Australian fan was attending his team's World Cup game against Brazil in June and went with the boxing kangaroo motif. Meanwhile, the Brazilian fans dressed in boxing gloves and had tears streaming down their faces, going with the Acelino Freitas motif.

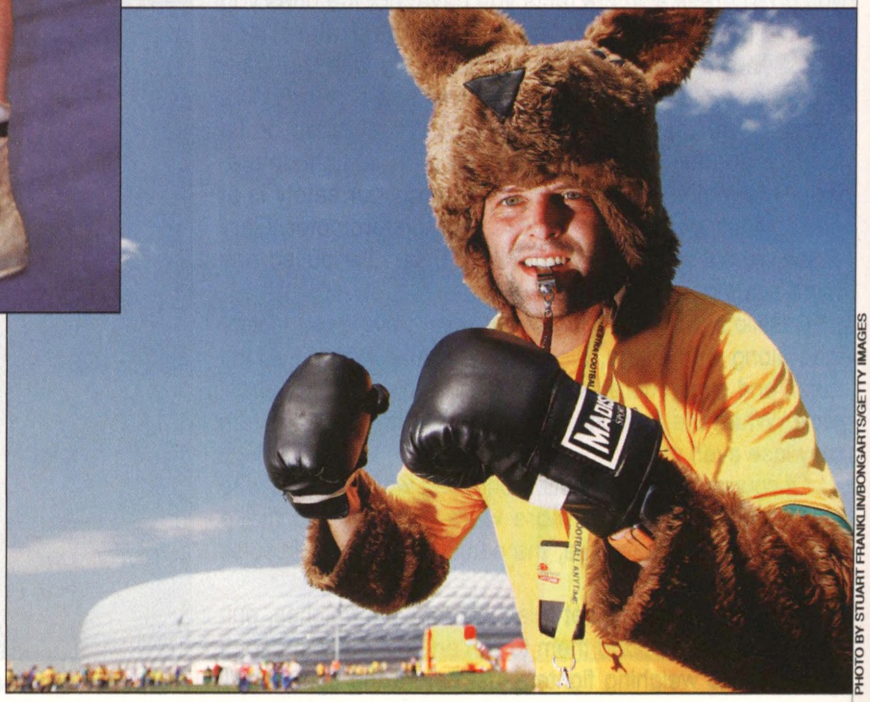


PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

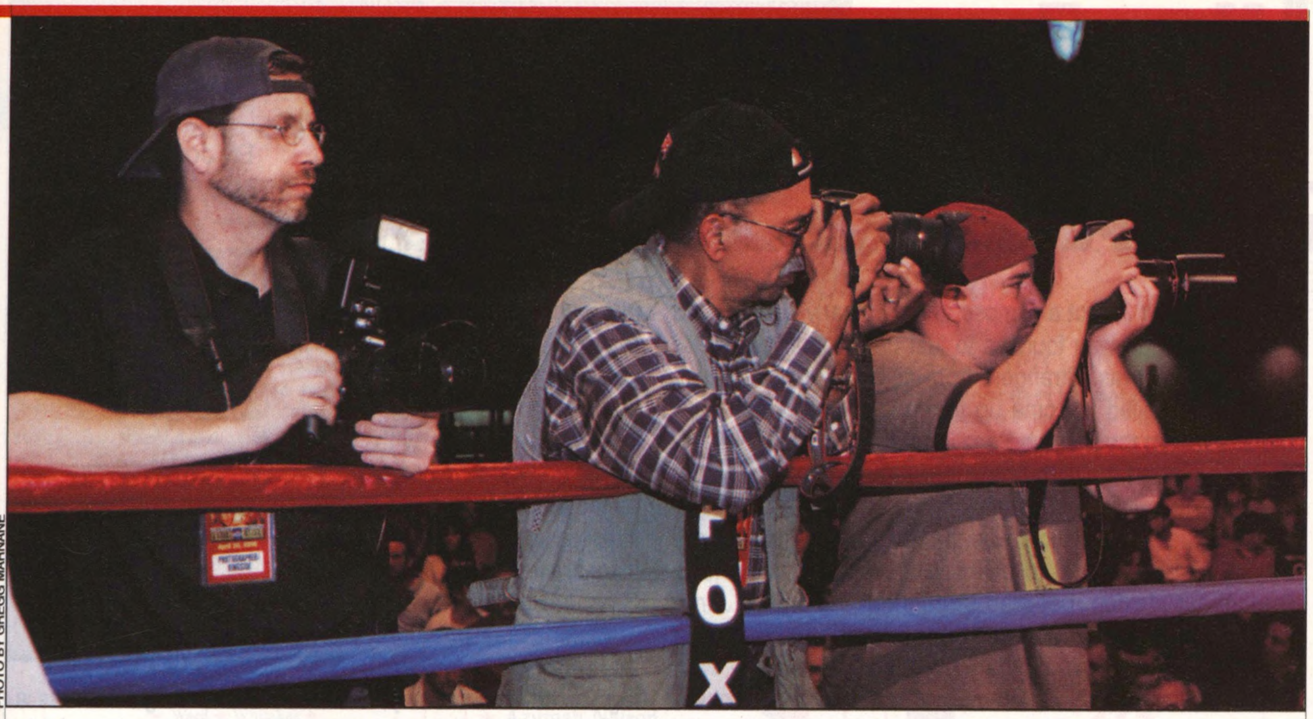


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

It's time to give some of boxing's finest photographers grades: Ray Bailey (center) and Ed Mulholland (right) both get an "A" for showing diligence and professionalism in snapping off photos; Marty Rosengarten (left) gets a "C-" for standing at the ready but failing to take pictures; and Gregg Marnane gets an "F" for wasting his time taking pictures of this motley crew instead of getting shots of the boxers.

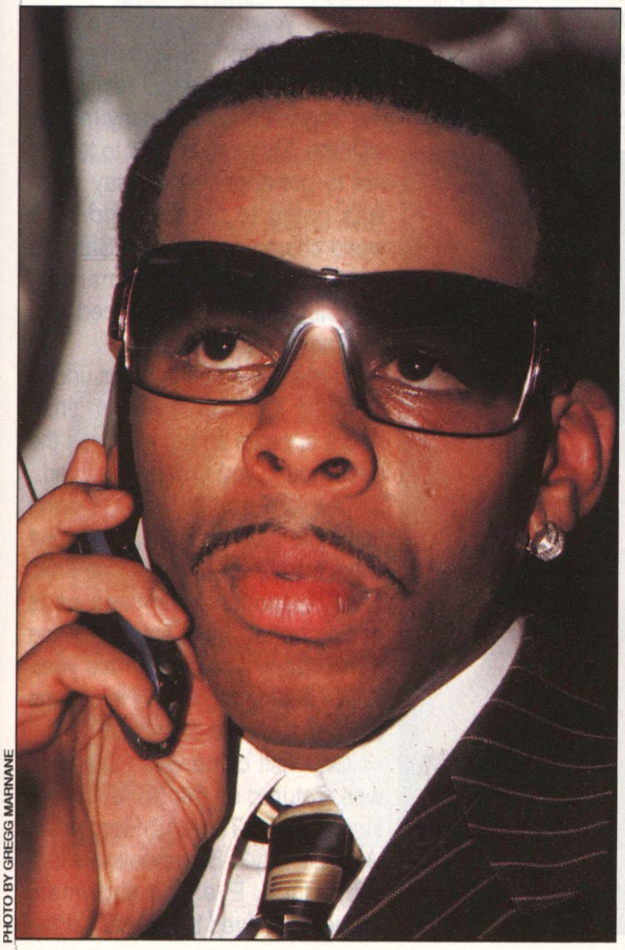


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

Give it up, Zahir. Nobody at HBO is going to return your calls.

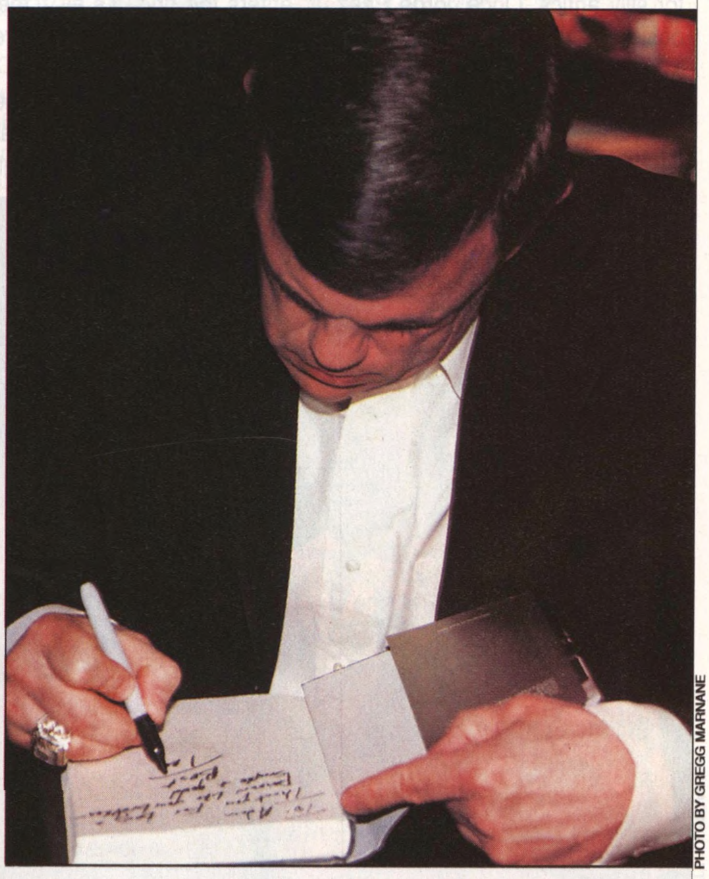


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

"Dear Donnie ... As soon as I finish signing this book for you, I intend to bash you upside the head with it. Hope you enjoy the book (assuming you can read the blood-soaked pages). Sincerely, Teddy Atlas." Don't worry, Teddy doesn't sign everybody's copy of his autobiography the way he signed Donnie Lalonde's. So you should be safe asking him to inscribe yours. (Unless your name is Mike Tyson, in which case you should expect the Lalonde treatment.)

By Joe Santoliquito

Jorge Paez Jr. Lightweight

Jorge Paez Jr. got a glimpse at a very early age, around the time he was four, as to just how popular a fighter his father was. Strangers from all over Mexicali, Mexico, felt compelled to come up to the little boy, whether on the street or in the market. Paez Jr. obliged by curling his little hand around theirs to shake it. Paez Jr. knew his father was special, but special for what he was a little unsure of.

What the boy did know was that Dad was regional property, someone he had to share with boxing fans not only throughout Mexico, but also throughout the world. Jorge Paez Sr. was known for his flamboyant ring attire and for the bizarre style in which he fought. Jorge Jr.'s only wish was that he could have been more a part of it.

Jorge Jr. is getting that chance now, as a budding professional. He's already forged a 9-0 (7) mark. And he's doing it *his way*. No need for outrageous costumes, no time for silly antics. Once Jorge Paez Jr. enters the ring, it's all business, all of the time.

If there is one lesson Jorge Sr. imparted on his son before he embarked on his pro career, it was this: "Don't be like I was." Jorge Jr. has taken it to heart. From the diligent way he trains to the way he attacks, Paez Jr. has designed his own identity. About the only similarity between the two is the name—and the face.

"I wanted to go with my own style, and not to be too much like my dad," stressed Jorge Jr., through interpreter Andy Ruiz, Paez Jr.'s manager.

Boxing has provided the background for healing to the Paez family, fractured since Jorge Jr. was a youngster. He was raised primarily by his mother, Silvia Cosio, while Jorge Sr. would make sporadic visits from San Diego. There were many times when Jorge Jr. would sit there by himself crying, his head in his little hands sulking over another unkept promise by Dad.

"I used to be sad when I was young, because I always used to ask my mother why my father left us and where he was," Jorge Jr. recalled. "Some of the time I'd feel really bad, but I wouldn't be angry. Never angry. I always had my mother with me. My mother used to tell me not to get angry. She'd say that I was going to make it and be a world champion one day. She told me that when you get married, sometimes you get divorced and you move to another place."

A little boy hears that, but understanding it comes only with time. And it appears time has salved the deep wound young Jorge endured.

"As I've gotten older, I don't think that much about how my dad wasn't around anymore," he said. "The relationship between us is getting better. I just started talking to my father again early this year. We're getting together. He's come to my last couple of fights."

One visit came when Jorge Jr. was featured on the Bernard Hopkins-Antonio Tarver undercard at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall, in early-June. Ever the showman, Jorge Sr. played to the early arriv-

(Continued on Page 90)

Pro Record

2005		
Feb. 4	Sergio Lopez, Mexicali, Mexico	KO 1
March 18	Arturo Martinez, Mexicali	KO 1
April 29	Adrian Tellez, Mexicali	KO 2
June 24	Antonio Valencia, Mexicali	KO 2
Aug. 12	Javier Segura, Laredo, TX	KO 2
Dec. 23	Lee De Leon, El Cajon, CA	KO 2
2006		
April 8	Ricky Alexander, Globe, AZ	KO 1
May 6	Lowell Brownfield, Las Vegas, NV	W 4
June 10	Travis Hartman, Atlantic City, NJ	W 4

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
9	9	0	0	7

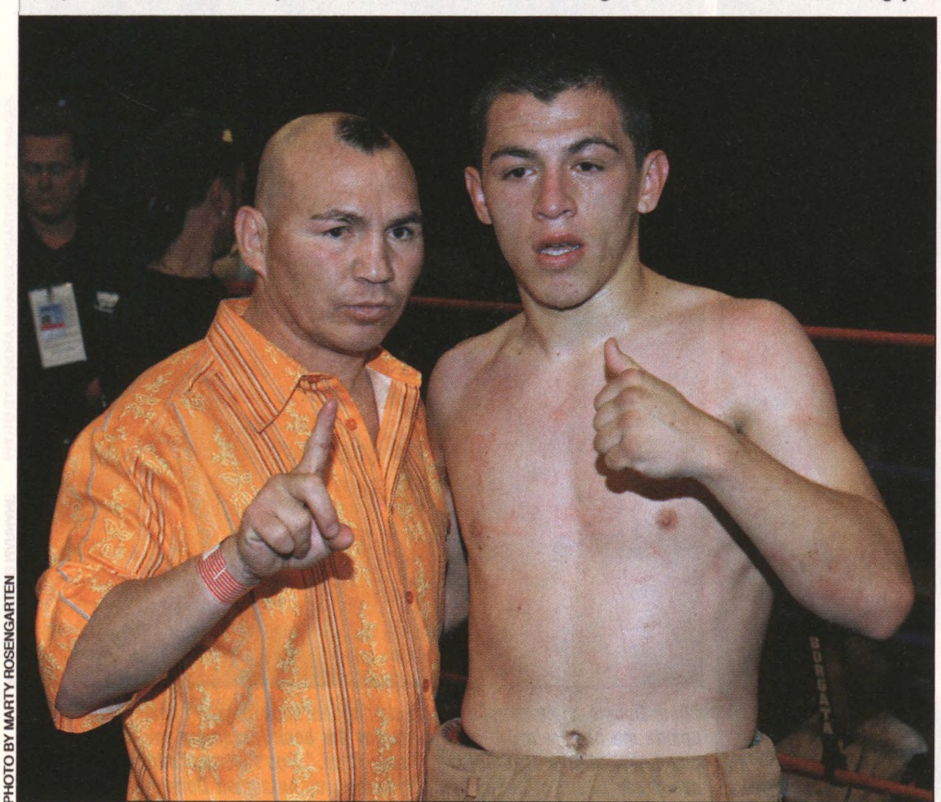


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Jorge Paez Jr. celebrates his ninth pro victory with his father, Jorge Sr.

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★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez
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★ Acelino "Popo" Freitas
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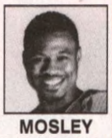
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Taylor vs. Wright

What Can You Do?

Taylor and Wright hooked up in one of the best middleweight title fights in years. Both landed plenty of leather during the entertaining, give-and-take encounter, but because the bout ended in a 12-round draw, nothing was settled.

PHOTO BY WILL HART HBO

Do It Again!

By Don Stewart

Increasingly more creative, ringwalks have become boxing's end-zone dance. On June 17, Winky Wright added another twist to that simple stroll from the dressing room when he ditched his robe for a gray pinstripe business suit. It has to be the first time a fighter has stepped

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Wright entered the ring wearing a rather bizarre outfit. The prefight wardrobe was an obvious symbol for a fighter who wants to involve himself in the business aspects of the sport.

through the ropes for a world-title bout looking less like a boxer and more like a banker.

What Wright wasn't banking on was leaving Memphis' FedEx Forum with nothing resolved.

His middleweight showdown with champion Jermain Taylor, the 2000 Olympic bronze medalist who eked out a pair of close wins against Bernard Hopkins to win and defend the title, proved to be a thriller. But the somewhat controversial decision, a split draw, wound up overshadowing an entertaining fight.

The rounds were tough to score, and the verdict could have gone either way. Still, Wright quickly fled the ring after the scores were announced, sans suit, disgusted over what he felt was another decision stolen from him by incompetent judges.

The former junior middleweight champ, who eventually agreed to be interviewed by HBO's Larry Merchant back in his dressing room, immediately ruled out a rematch. He said there were other fights out there, that the fans knew who really won.

The prefight wardrobe was an obvious symbol for a fighter who wants to involve himself in the business aspects of the sport, a la Oscar De La Hoya. After having promoter Gary Shaw represent him for his past few fights, Wright will now fight under his own promotional banner. He also has a clothing line coming out this fall.

But if Wright's serious about being a promoter, he has to realize that a rematch with Taylor is the best option for his career.

"I think it's essential," said Dan Birmingham, Wright's longtime trainer. "We have a lot of unfinished business because of the judges. Hopefully, Wink wants the rematch. I think HBO needs the rematch."

Boxing needs the rematch. We're still not sure which man is the best 160-pounder in the world. That, and the fact

PHOTO AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Even though Wright did block a lot of Taylor's punches with his hands-high defense, a good number of the champion's offerings did penetrate Winky's guard. Taylor also threw more punches, which could have influenced the judges.

that the first clash defied expectations in proving to be one of the best middleweight title fights of the past decade, figures to make a rematch lucrative for all involved. No offense to the Sam Solimans of the division, but Taylor-Wright II is easily the most attractive middleweight matchup out there.

"I think it would be interesting," Showtime analyst Al Bernstein said. "I'd like to see it again. I know there are other circumstances that might make people not do it."

Getting the two sides to see eye-to-eye again might require mediation from Jimmy Carter. Then again, the prospect of big money has a way of bringing folks together. Though Taylor and Wright appear poised to take on lighter opposition this fall, all roads lead back to a rematch.

The first meeting was fought in a half-empty arena, thanks to ticket overpricing ($1,250-$75) by site promoter Prize Fight Boxing. The 9,678 who were there made plenty of noise, mostly for the 27-year-old Taylor, a native of nearby Arkansas.

Both fighters gave them plenty of reasons to get excited. They took turns throwing and eating combinations, creating a thrilling fight that often saw multiple momentum swings per round. Neither appeared to be dramatically staggered or hurt at any point, though, giving the bout a Monitor-vs.-Merrimack feel.

Wright, who entered the fight number-two on most pound-for-pound lists, was surprisingly stationary. He opted to block blows with his arms and gloves rather than use his lateral movement to prevent Taylor from teeing off. When he returned fire, Wright landed more frequently than his younger opponent. Not only did he expose Taylor's defensive weaknesses, but also he often managed to drive back the bigger fighter.

Part of Taylor's game plan was to drop back into corners to set up counters. It backfired as Wright enjoyed some of his best moments with Taylor's back against the ropes. "He kept his left hand down, he doesn't use his height, he went straight to the ropes, which, of course, is a mistake," Emanuel Steward, who took over as Taylor's trainer eight weeks before the fight,

If Not A Rematch, What's Next?

Unfortunately for fight fans seeking closure in the wake of the Jermain Taylor-Winky Wright draw, the two appeared to be heading toward paydays against lesser-regarded opponents instead of a rematch.

Top Rank offered Wright what would have been a career-high $4-million to face top welterweight contender Antonio Margarito in a junior middleweight bout on October 7. Wright turned down the offer via the media, reportedly saying he wanted the $8-million Top Rank offered Floyd Mayweather to meet Margarito.

Wright earned $3.2-million for the draw with Taylor.

"We did make the offer," Top Rank publicist Lee Samuels confirmed. "But it was declined in the local newspaper in Tampa."

Wright believes he can net something in the neighborhood of $4-million for a homecoming fight in his native Florida. He then plans to go after super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe. Spurned by Mayweather and Wright, Top Rank was considering Joel Julio-conqueror Carlos Quintana for Margarito's October 7 opponent.

Meanwhile, Taylor promoter Lou DiBella looked to be living up to his promise of getting his fighter a softer touch for his next defense. ESPN.com reported that DiBella was in negotiations with Jeff Wald, a top executive of *The Contender* promotional group, for a Taylor-Sergio Mora pay-per-view fight this fall.

Mora, 18-0, (4), the winner of the first season of *The Contender*, figures to be a step down from Wright and Bernard Hopkins. Since outpointing Peter Manfredo Jr. in the show's final last spring, Mora has captured a controversial decision in a rematch with Manfredo and come off the floor to stop former prospect Archak TerMeliksetian. As we went to press, Mora, who lost a decision to Taylor in the amateurs, was scheduled to fight Eric Regan on an August 25 *Contender* special.

DiBella had initially planned a homecoming bout for Taylor in Little Rock, Arkansas, but Taylor-Mora appeared headed for the West Coast, where the Los Angeles native Mora will attract more fans.

"There is no rematch with Winky Wright right now," DiBella told ESPN.com, "so I have to look at things that make sense for Jermain and things that are marketable and salable. A fight against the guy who won *The Contender* will gather attention. This is a match that will attract a lot of fans on the West Coast."

It's an intriguing fight, but it won't do much to clean up the middleweight mess. The quickest fix is getting Wright and Taylor back together. Let's hope we don't have to wait through too many homecoming fights before that happens.

—D.S.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Will Mora go from* Contender *to challenger?

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor absorbed more blows in his 12 rounds against Wright than he did in 24 rounds with Bernard Hopkins. But it is also true that none of Wright's punches seem to bother him as much as the right hands that wobbled Taylor in his title-winning match with B-Hop.

told the *Philadelphia Daily News*. "His legs were crossed a lot. But even with all that, I always felt he would win."

Taylor landed his share of power-shots. Even when his bombs bounced off Wright's protective shell, the force often drove Winky back. He was most effective in the middle of the ring with a little distance. But thanks largely to Wright's southpaw stance, Taylor never got his jab going. He also neglected to go to the body.

Both produced some of the highest CompuBox numbers of their careers. Taylor was busier, landing 163 of 703 punches (23 percent), while Wright connected on 226 of 643 (35 percent). Wright landed 31 percent of his jabs, compared to just 13 percent for Taylor.

An accidental headbutt and repeated Wright jabs had Taylor's left eye closing by the 10th. Feeling the title was in the bag, Wright raised his arms after dominating the 11th. Despite pleas from Birmingham to close the deal in the final round, a tired Wright backed up and jabbed from the outside in the 12th. An equally tired Taylor landed a few decent shots, giving him the round on two of the judges' cards.

Ray Hawkins had it 115-113 for Wright, Melvin Lathan scored it even at 114-114 (the same as THE RING), and Chuck Giampa gave it to Taylor by a 115-113 nod. Lathan gave the final round to Taylor.

"I landed a couple of good punches, but I really didn't think I hurt him," Taylor said afterward. "But he didn't have much power either. If he wanted the title so bad, he should have fought all 12 rounds. I fought all 12 rounds. This is boxing. You have to fight all 12 rounds."

Scores across press row varied. The New York *Daily News* scored it for Taylor, ESPN.com had it even, while the *Philadelphia Daily News* and *The Boston Globe* each had it for Wright. Nearly 50 percent of fans who voted on ESPN.com and Fightnews.com online polls thought Wright won. Not that it mattered.

"Wink's tired of getting jobbed by the judges," Birmingham said. "It's happened several times in big fights. You have judges that have never boxed. I think to be a judge, a prerequisite should be that you've had an amateur career and at least a dozen pro fights. It's painful to work so hard and have it taken away by someone with a pen and paper."

But this wasn't the travesty that we've seen in so many other high-profile draws, such as Lennox Lewis-Evander Holyfield I. It all came down to what impressed the observer more, Taylor's power or Wright's defense and lighter punches?

"When a scoring blow is a telling blow, a clear blow that someone is catching someone with ... you could see each time he threw a punch, some of them slipped through, but the majority of them are getting caught on the hands and arms," Wright said during an appearance on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. "My punches are catching him clear. Flush shots on the face and the body. And I'm the one pushing the fight."

These things are going to happen in boxing. Until the sport allows overtime rounds or adopts the *American Idol* approach and lets viewers select the winner, the judges will have the final word. The only option for Wright and Taylor is to do it again.

If it happens, the rematch would create several intriguing questions. Would Wright use more lateral movement, as Birmingham had asked? Does Taylor stay off the ropes? Does he find a way to employ his jab? At 34, is Wright on a slow decline, while the younger Taylor is still growing toward his peak?

Possibly realizing the hurdles involved, the network isn't going to do

much to advocate a return bout. Kery Davis, HBO Sports' senior vice president of programming, said it would be up to the promoters to agree to a second fight. Snickers could shoot a "not going anywhere for a while" commercial around those negotiations.

Talks were so contentious between Shaw and Taylor's promoter, Lou DiBella, earlier this year that the first Taylor-Wright fight barely came off. After the draw was announced, Shaw and DiBella rushed to press row to make passionate cases for their respective fighters. Their rants, which included some choice words, reflected the bad blood still lingering from those negotiations.

DiBella ruled out an immediate rematch, saying Taylor's next fight would be a hometown optional defense this fall against a forward-moving opponent who will allow his guy to look good. He probably deserves a softer touch. After two close wins against Hopkins, and now the Wright draw, Taylor has fought his last 36 rounds against two of the toughest men in the sport to look good against.

"Jermain has fought the best guys out there his last three fights," DiBella told *The Boston Globe*. "Jermain's next fight will be against Bozo the Clown in Little Rock."

Though Bozo might be rated in the IBF top 10, Davis said HBO wouldn't televise a mismatch.

Wright, 50-3-1 (25), and Taylor, 25-0-1 (17), showed a lot of respect for each other before and after the fight. If only they could take that respect to the bargaining table. "I would love to fight this man again," Taylor said of Wright. "If the money's right, I'll fight anybody."

"Well, you know he's not gonna want to fight me again," Wright said on *Friday Night Fights*. "This is his toughest fight. He fought two fights with Bernard, and both of them together wasn't as tough as this fight for him. I feel that I'm just tired of always getting the short end of the stick, always getting the shaft. That's what I feel I'm getting."

Wright said he wants to go after big names. Well, forget about De La Hoya, who said he'll only return to fight Floyd Mayweather. Fresh off his "farewell" win against Antonio Tarver, Hopkins doesn't appear eager to meet the tricky southpaw. It's left Wright mentioning super middleweight champ Joe Calzaghe, another southpaw whose speed, size, and power could be too much for the 34-year-old to overcome.

"They're not wanting to take the rematch very much," Bernstein said of Team Wright. "But, the problem is, I don't know what's available to him at this juncture? What's another fight that could make him a lot of money? He's at the age where that should be an issue."

The message is clear: Do it again, and do it soon. Do it in Vegas. Move it to pay-per-view. Whatever it takes. Wright can even wear another suit on his ringwalk.

But next time, maybe he should leave the tie at home. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for the Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

Nobody looked very pleased after the stalemate verdict was announced, but at least Taylor retained the middleweight championship. Although Wright claimed he wasn't interested in a rematch, another crack at Taylor remains the biggest fight available to him.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

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BALDOMIR'S FOR REAL!

Baldomir starts to celebrate as Gatti hits the floor and referee Wayne Hedgepeth waves the fight in the 2:50 mark of the ninth round. The uncompromising victory solidified Baldomir's status as the world welterweight champion.

The Sweet Truth About "Sweet Tooth"

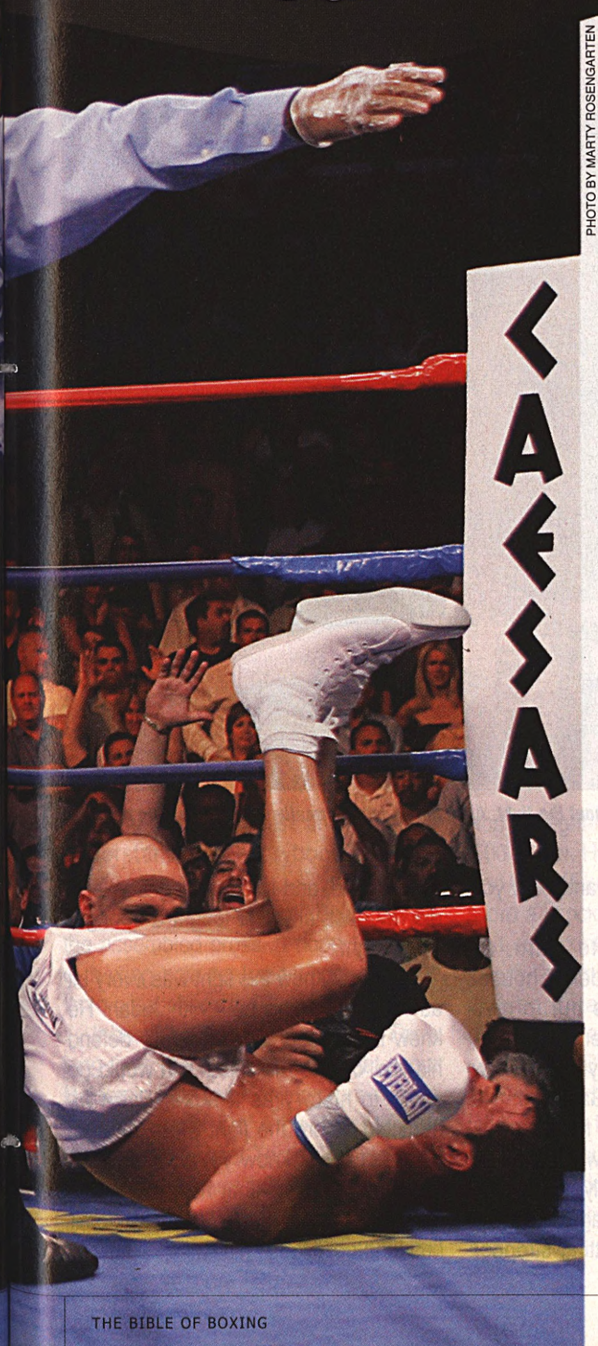

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

By Eric Raskin

The streets of Los Angeles are teeming with runners. There are those who run to improve their physical conditioning—like Carlos Baldomir, who trains at the La Brea Boxing Gym. And there are those who run because they're on the lower rungs of the entertainment industry. One of the duties of a Hollywood production assistant is to be a "runner," responsible for delivering scripts to actors' homes as quickly as possible. Most of them do a fine job. But whoever's been assigned to deliver the scripts to Baldomir has been screwing up royally.

Baldomir was supposed to be a tune-up opponent for Zab Judah as the Brooklyn southpaw prepared for a pay-per-view superfight with Floyd Mayweather. Baldomir's copy of the script never arrived, so he improvised, kicking Judah's butt in front of a stunned Madison Square Garden crowd and winning the welterweight championship of the world. Six months later, Baldomir was supposed to hand the title over to Arturo Gatti, giving a sellout crowd of 12,763 fans in Atlantic City the feel-good story they'd paid for and setting up a huge event featuring Gatti and Miguel Cotto down the road. Again, Baldomir's script runner got lost on the way to La Brea. Baldomir overwhelmed Gatti and knocked him out in the ninth round.

In all likelihood, we'll next see Baldomir, the one and only champion of the welterweight division, take on Mayweather, the man most people consider the best fighter in the 147-pound class. We all know what the script says: Mayweather barely breaks a sweat: too fast, too slick, too good.

But in case you haven't figured it out by now, Baldomir has little use for scripts, unless perhaps the toilet paper roll runs out. He knocked off Judah and knocked out Gatti. Maybe it's about time the boxing world faces facts: Just because you hadn't heard of a fighter until a few months ago, and just because he has nine losses and six draws on his record, that doesn't mean he can't fight. Carlos Baldomir can fight. In this sport, you don't have to be born a prince to become a king, and Baldomir's ascendance to the welterweight throne was no accident.

Do followers of the fight game realize that yet? Probably the

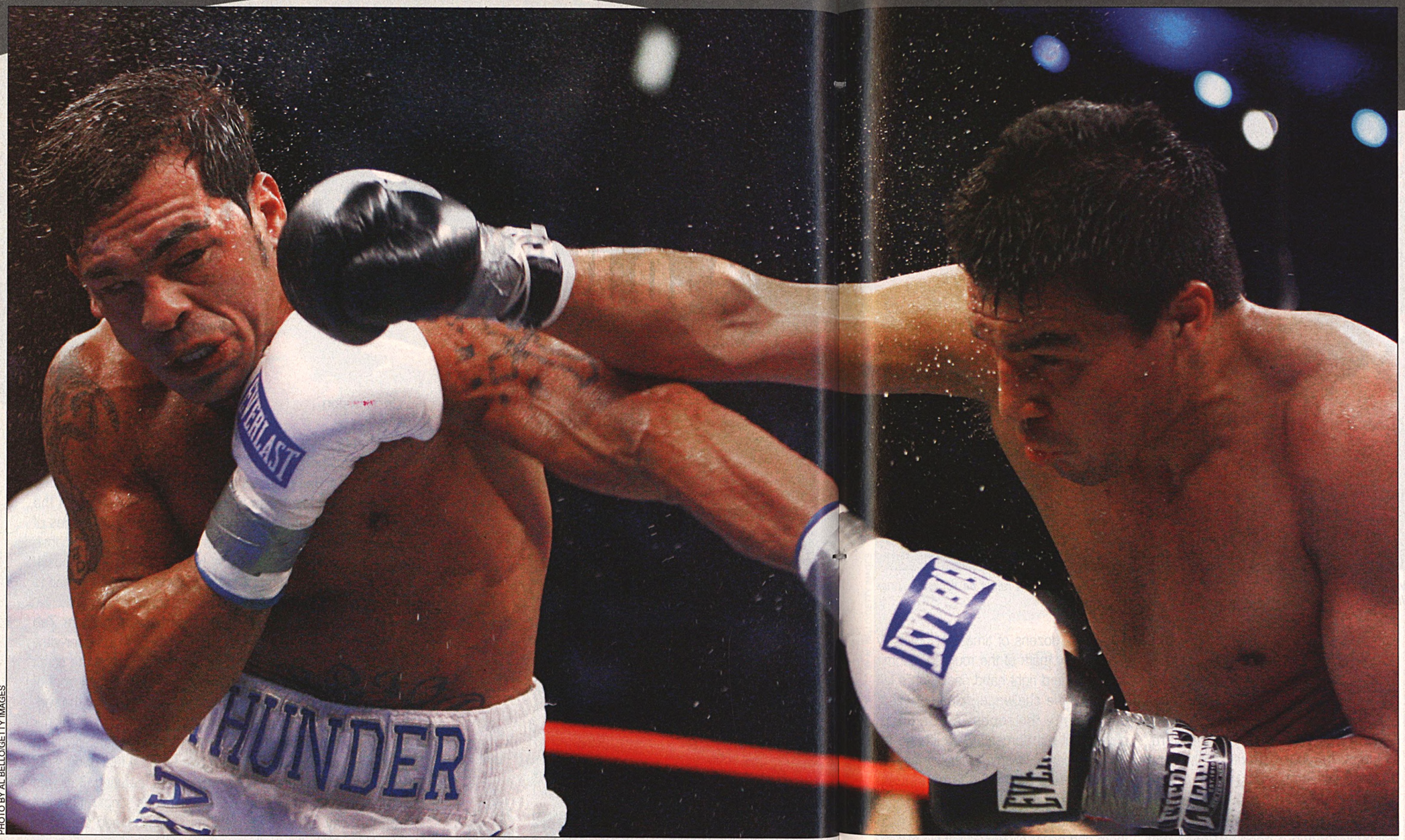

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Baldomir's right hand was a major weapon for the Argentinean strongman throughout the fight. Although he isn't normally considered a big puncher, Baldomir's blows wreaked havoc on Gatti and handed him his ninth loss.

most telling comment came from HBO analyst Emanuel Steward following Baldomir's destruction of Gatti: "We have a new major factor in the welterweight division." Steward spoke for the majority of the public when he implied that even after beating Judah and becoming the legit champion, Baldomir wasn't viewed as a "major factor." He was a champion, and yet a lot of people weren't even willing to rank him as a contender. What does a guy have to do to earn a little respect? Does he have to come over to your house and beat you up personally?

That's what he did to Gatti, as Boardwalk Hall is "Thunder's" house, and Gatti had no choice but to give respect to his opponent afterward.

"Baldomir is a strong guy. I know now why he beat Zab Judah," Gatti said. "He trained for me, he trained for my style, he looked like he knew what he was doing against me. He really fought well tonight, he did a great job against me ... You could tell he was getting stronger every round, and I was getting weaker. I did my best, and just fought a stronger guy tonight."

Baldomir knew this fight was every bit as important as his bout with Judah. He knew he needed to successfully defend his title, or else the Judah win would go down in history as a fluke. Even *he* admitted before the fight with Gatti that he didn't really know yet what being a champion felt like—that he'd only know after making that first defense. Baldomir has long believed in himself as a fighter, but he had the awareness and humility to understand that everybody else still needed convincing.

After disposing of Gatti, Baldomir told the assembled press, "I hope the world of boxing now realizes who I am, that I'm a great champion."

It hasn't always been that way. For a long time, there was nothing great about Baldomir. One of six children growing up poor in Santa Fe, Argentina, "Tata" (translation: "Sweet Tooth") started boxing at age 14 and put together a 38-2 amateur record before turning pro in 1993 at 21 years of age. His fourth fight was an eight-round draw against a sub-.500 fighter. His seventh fight was a second-round knockout loss. He didn't score a knockout win until his 17th fight. And so it continued for the next several years—winning some, losing some, picking up an inordinate amount of draws, and rarely scoring kayos. By the end of '98, Baldomir's record stood at 24-9-4 (4). He had grown up idolizing fellow Santa Fe native Carlos Monzon, but aside from their shared propensity for fighting draws, Baldomir in no way looked like the next Monzon. He didn't look like the next anything. In his lone fight in America, he lost a decision to Giorbis Barthelemy at the Great Western Forum in Inglewood, California. He also had his passport stamped in Denmark, where he was decisioned by Soren Sondergaard, and in South Africa, where he settled for a controversial draw against Dingaan Thobela.

After '98, the traveling continued. But the losing stopped. Baldomir defeated 12-1-1 Dejan Zivkovic in Italy. He returned to Denmark and knocked out 30-0 Frank Olsen. He went to London, England, where he struggled mightily, but emerged victorious when 19-0 Joshua Clottey was disqualified in the 11th round for repeatedly headbutting the Argentine. Baldomir said that the difficult bout with Clottey helped him to turn a corner in his journeyman career, that he "found himself" when he rallied late in the fight en route to the DQ.

Five straight wins followed, until a draw against 24-0-2 Hassan Al in Denmark slowed Baldomir's progress. In his next fight, Tata came back to Copenhagen and defeated Al. Two fights later, Baldomir suffered another draw, this time against 27-0 Mexican Jose Luis Cruz in Mexico, but the ledger has been blemish-free since. Three consecutive wins in Anaheim, California. A knockout in Germany. A decision over 26-1 Miguel Angel Rodriguez in Chicago that made the Argentine the WBC's mandatory contender. And one massive upset later (he was a 10-1 underdog against Judah), the late-bloomin' father of four was champion of the world.

It was about three years ago that Baldomir began training in L.A., remaining attached to his longtime trainer Jorge Lemos, but adding La Brea-based Amilcar Brusa, the very man who trained Monzon back when Tata was just a tot. And those L.A. training camps are a grind. They have to be—otherwise, Baldomir would never work his way back down to 147 pounds from the 185-190 pounds he admits to walking around at between fights. Apparently, that "Sweet Tooth" hasn't subsided much with age.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Baldomir also displayed an accurate and effective left jab against Gatti, and he even got up on his toes and boxed at range on occasion. Once considered a one-dimensional plodder, the champion is proving to be a well-rounded craftsman.

Nor has anything else about the welterweight champion, who's fighting better at age 35 than he ever has before. He was listed as an 8-5 underdog against Gatti, but it didn't take long before it became apparent that the smart money was on Baldomir.

About 45 seconds into the fight, the first chants of "Gat-ti! Gat-ti!" resonated in the arena. Five seconds later, Gatti, 147, Jersey City, landed a right hand to the body—and immediately shook that often-injured right hand. He noticeably favored the left jab and left hook as his weapons of choice after that. Meanwhile, the left jab of Baldomir, 147, became his weapon of choice as he showed he could box on at least even terms with the slightly quicker Gatti. The first round was close and could have been scored either way.

The next few were not and could not have been. Baldomir continued landing his jab and demonstrating that he could box on his toes in the second, and he started dropping in his blistering overhand right, the same punch that sent Judah to Funkytown in the seventh round of their fight. "I knew he held his left hand down low, so I knew I could counter with my right," Baldomir would explain afterward. Early in the third, Baldomir landed a searing right hand that was clearly his best punch of the fight—until an even better one followed a few seconds later. Late in the round, Baldomir landed a good left hook that froze Gatti, and the champion let out a smile. It was becoming as clear to him as it was to everybody else in the building that this was his fight to lose. He battered Gatti with both hands in the final moments before the bell, the infamous Gatti defense—or lack thereof—making the Argentine's task look easy. As he returned to his corner, Gatti's left eye was swelling from above, and he had a cut beneath his right eye.

Gatti fared only marginally better in the fourth, and then came the fifth, clearly the best round of the fight, featuring the sort of action and drama that we've seen from Gatti dozens of times. At precisely the halfway mark of the round, Baldomir landed a hard right hand near Gatti's left eye, and the challenger, clearly dazed, backed into the ropes. As Baldomir dished out punishment, Gatti looked for opportunities to counter with his famous left hook, and he landed three tremendous ones in the midst of the spine-tingling exchanges. But Baldomir absorbed them and never blinked. "I felt his punches, but he didn't hurt me at all," the champ would later say. According to CompuBox stats, Gatti landed 21 of 38 powershots in the round, for an impressive 55 percent. But Baldomir went 51 for 79, good for 65 percent.

Baldomir took the sixth round off and Gatti won it on two of the judges' scorecards, but really the only noteworthy thing that happened was when Baldomir landed a left to the body that seemed to clip Gatti's arm along the way, and the crowd favorite pulled away holding his right wrist. Incredibly, it wasn't long before the most courageous fighter of his

As is usually the case, Gatti gave it his all, and even came off the ropes with some blistering shots of his own (above). But Baldomir wasn't even buzzed by Gatti's best offerings and always fired back with something more damaging (below).

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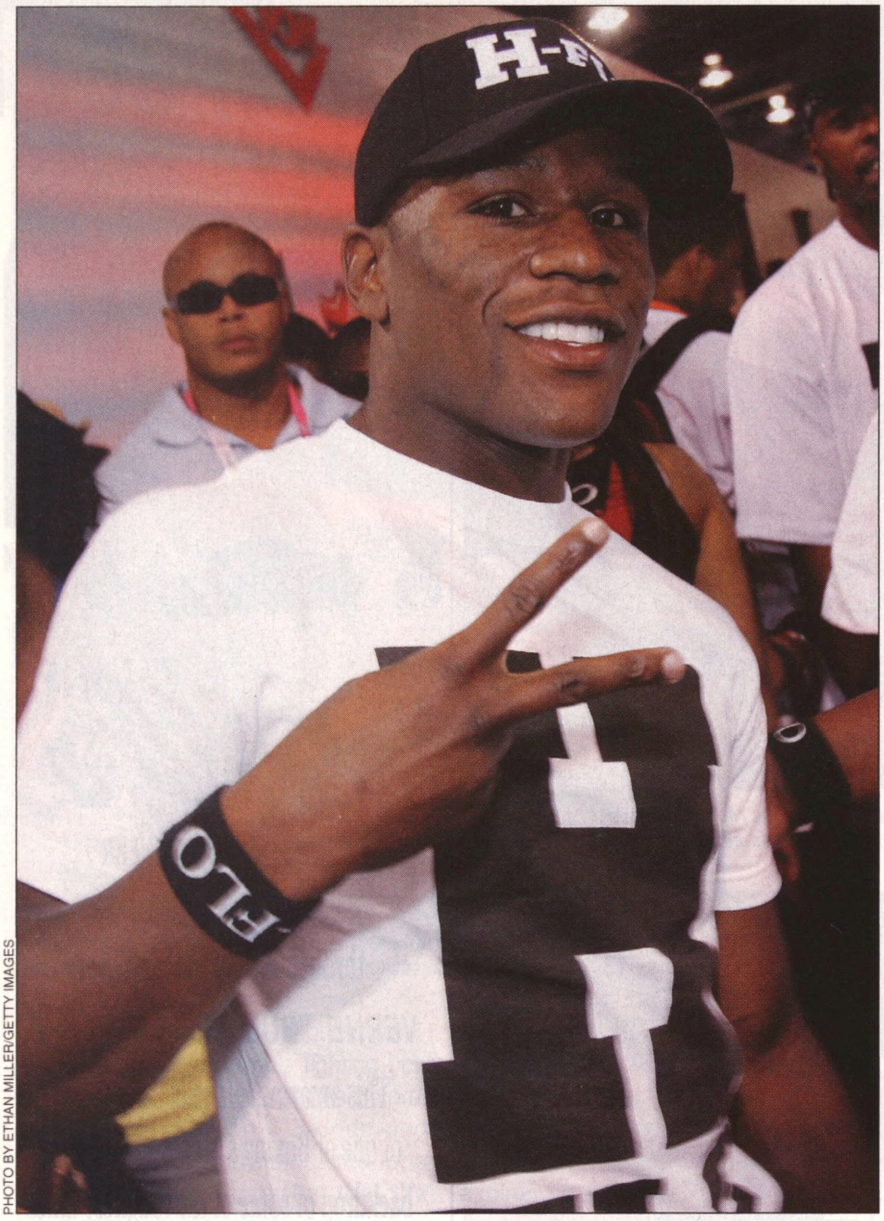


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Is Mayweather next for Baldomir? Nothing is set yet, but Baldomir called out "Pretty Boy" after pounding Gatti into defeat, and HBO sure sounded like it wanted to televise the event.

era was throwing the right hand again.

The seventh was another slow round, with one nice right hand winning it for Baldomir. But the action heated up again in the eighth, when Gatti slipped to the canvas (correctly waved off by referee Wayne Hedgepeth) during a wild exchange late in the round. Not that Gatti would ever think of doing anything like this, but it would have been in his best interest to fake an injury and stay down, because Baldomir was going to make the next round a nightmare for him.

Midway through the ninth, Baldomir hurt Gatti with a right, backing him into the ropes again. Gatti made his last stand in another awesome flurry of two-way action, but eventually it just became one-way, as Baldomir, 43-9-6 (13), bombarded Gatti with wicked shots. Finally, a brutal left hook crashed home, and Gatti pitched headfirst to the mat. He rose on shaky legs at the count of five, the fight was questionably allowed to continue, and when a series of grazing blows knocked him down again, Hedgepeth waved off the fight at the 2:50 mark.

"Whoever fights this guy, Baldomir, better be prepared to box," Steward warned afterward, having been converted into a believer. "He can take a punch, he's strong, and to just stand there and trade punches with him, including [Antonio] Margarito, it could be suicidal. Whoever fights him better use footwork. He's not the fastest guy on his feet. But he's got a tough chin, good punch, tremendous internal strength—he's going to be hard to beat."

Baldomir came into the Gatti fight as the "B-side" from a promotional point of view, despite being the champion. Now, after two consecutive major wins, is he an "A-side"?

"I don't know that I would necessarily think he's an 'A-side,'" said HBO Sports Senior Vice President of Programming Kery Davis. "But I do think he's a player in a jam-packed, talent-laden division. Before this fight, no one really knew if he was for real or not, because more people attributed the Judah loss to Judah than gave credit to Baldomir. Now, with this fight, hey, let's give Baldomir some credit. I think that Baldomir can make a good fight with a number of the top welterweights. There are fights you want to see now: Ricky Hatton, Floyd Mayweather, Miguel Cotto. There are a number of fights to do with him. I don't necessarily think he's an 'A-side' in those fights—but I think he makes those fights very interesting."

One of those fights, in particular, interests Baldomir.

"I'm looking for Mayweather," the Argentine declared. "As of now, I tell Mayweather that I am the true champion, that that title he has is mine, I tell Hatton that the title he has is mine, and I am the true champion."

Only a fool could disagree with that logic. Mayweather and Hatton both won alphabet belts that Baldomir would have taken from Judah if he'd been willing to pay the sanctioning fees. Just look who's wearing THE RING belt. That tells you everything you need to know. And that's part of why Davis is so keen to make Baldomir-Mayweather happen.

"I think that anytime you can have a guy like Mayweather fighting for the legitimate welterweight championship, and Baldomir *is* the legitimate welterweight champion, I think that's a very intriguing fight, and I think the boxing fans would like to see it," Davis said shortly after Baldomir-Gatti ended, though he indicated that it was too soon to say if it's an HBO fight or a pay-per-

GOODBYE GATTI?

Is Gatti's remarkable career over?

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Normally, Arturo Gatti likes to make his postfight press conferences quick because he has a party to get to. After his loss to Carlos Baldomir, he kept his appearance at the press conference blink-and-you-miss-it short because he just wanted to get the hell out of there.

Gatti made his way to the podium only about 20 minutes after the fight had ended. He spoke for about 30 seconds, thanking everyone who made the fight possible and giving Baldomir his props, and then he was gone. He had truly believed he was going to beat Baldomir and win the welterweight championship, and he had failed—in brutal fashion. Gatti was hurting in more ways than one.

And adding to his disheartened mood was the fact that he knew this might be the last time he would ever step through the ropes. For someone who loves to fight and lives to fight the way Gatti does, that's a tough emotional blow indeed. But he shot straight with HBO's Larry Merchant after the fight.

"Tonight, it was a tough thing to take a beating like that," Gatti said. Merchant asked if that meant he'd consider retirement. "Probably. I'm not sure yet, but after what happened tonight, I'm going to think about it."

The 34-year-old Gatti, 40-8 (31), didn't look like a *shot* fighter against Baldomir. He looked like a slightly-past-his-best fighter who was outgunned. But with all of the punishment he's taken, with all of the millions he's made, and with the knowledge that the brass ring in the welterweight division is out of his reach, he shouldn't need to be totally used up to retire. Here's hoping that, after taking some time to think it over, this beloved warrior comes to the same conclusion.

—E.R.

view fight. "This was a terrific performance tonight. I suspect that we probably did very well on television; it was an action-packed fight, and a lot of people saw what Baldomir did and a lot of people are going to be impressed with him. He came into New York and he chased Judah out of the ring, and he came into Atlantic City and knocked out Arturo Gatti. What more buildup to an event can you have? I think him and Floyd Mayweather turns into an event now."

Baldomir went from selling cleaning products door-to-door so he could earn a living because boxing wasn't paying the bills, to making a then-career-high $100,000 for the Judah fight, to making a staggering $1.4-million for the Gatti fight. And there will probably be even more than that coming his way for a Mayweather fight.

The only thing that won't be coming Baldomir's way is a script. Unless perhaps we're talking about a script for his life story. After all, Baldomir's promoters started calling him "The Cinderella Man" following his win over Judah.

But Jim Braddock lost his title in his first defense. His legendary upset victory for the championship was somewhat of a fluke.

As everyone should be able to see now, Baldomir's was not. ■

Wladimir Klitschko

"I Never Lost My Confidence"

In the shadow of Berlin's Olympiastadion, the iconic structure that staged the pernicious pageantry of Adolf Hitler and the purity of Jesse Owens at the Olympic Games of 1936, and 70 years later the soccer World Cup, the heir apparent to the world heavyweight throne sat in his hotel room. Wladimir Klitschko, relaxed and candid, had agreed to talk about a personal journey through torment, triumph, and temperament. While many may have questioned the 30-year-old boxer's ability to come back from the kind of shattering defeats he suffered against Corrie Sanders and Lamon Brewster, he insisted that his own self-confidence was never in doubt.

His seventh-round knockout of Chris Byrd in April won Klitschko, 46-3 (41), the IBF heavyweight title, elevating him to the top of THE RING's heavyweight ratings. But his mission is to accomplish much more, and first among his priorities is winning THE RING heavyweight championship belt. Thoughtful, articulate, and disarmingly open, Klitschko gave European correspondent Brian Doogan a revealing interview, suggestive of a man with the inner strength, to ultimately overcome.

Klitschko also spoke about the work he and his older brother Vitali, the former world heavyweight champion, are doing for UNESCO, the United Nations organization that provides education and renewed hope to underprivileged children around the world. "These are people, our fellow human beings, and we need to help them," he said, emphasizing the fact that he and big brother have been the most politically active heavyweights for many generations, a throwback to the mantle taken up by Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis, and Jack Johnson before them. In their Ukrainian homeland, they were highly visible symbols of the Orange Revolution that, two years ago, placed democracy at the heart of the former Soviet state.

Ukraine performed magnificently, but failed to win the World Cup in Germany. But Klitschko's successes could sustain his country's sporting ambitions—and define a much-yearned-for new era in heavyweight boxing—for many years to come. This was a good time to talk.

The Ring: Immediately after your victory over Chris Byrd, you talked about how you had been at the bottom of boxing and you quoted back what some people had said about you: "no chin, no confidence, no stamina, no balls." Just what did it mean to you to be able to redeem yourself and be re-established as the foremost heavyweight fighter in the world today?

Wladimir Klitschko: This win means a lot to me. I know I still have a lot of critics as well, but this is good. I like this. After I lost, my opponents lost respect for me. I remember a time when I'd get in the ring and my opponents would be shaking. I could see them shaking. They showed their fear to me. No one thought they would beat me. But the feeling people had after I lost to Lamon Brewster, this was okay for me because, if people underestimate me, they will experience a very unpleasant shock. I feel good about the result against Chris Byrd. It was a very dominant display, and he is such a difficult fighter to deal with. He's a fighter who can make you look bad, as he's done to a lot of fighters down the years.

The Ring: How confident were you that you could come back from the defeat by Brewster? It was so devastating that, psychologically, you must have been in a pretty bad place.

WK: Opinion outside was totally different to what I felt inside. I always believed that I could do my job better than I had first against Corrie Sanders (who knocked out Klitschko in two rounds in March 2003) and then against Brewster. I knew this. Something wasn't right. But a man has to get up and get back into the fight. I knew this would be no easy journey for me, but I was determined to make it.

The Ring: Where were you then after the Brewster bout?

WK: Where was I? I was in the hell of boxing. *Boxing News* (the British weekly) brought out a cover that showed me lying on the floor, with my face bloodied, beneath the headline, "Broken Man." I need to say thanks to those guys now—not just *Boxing News*, but everybody who felt this way about me. But that cover, that image stayed in my mind. I knew I didn't deserve it, but I had to stop talking and just fight. This was the only worthwhile response. Talking doesn't mean anything and, ultimately, neither do headlines. After words, you have to deliver action. Otherwise the words are empty, useless, a waste of your breath. "Dead man walking"; that's what people outside were saying about me. I know this. Well, this

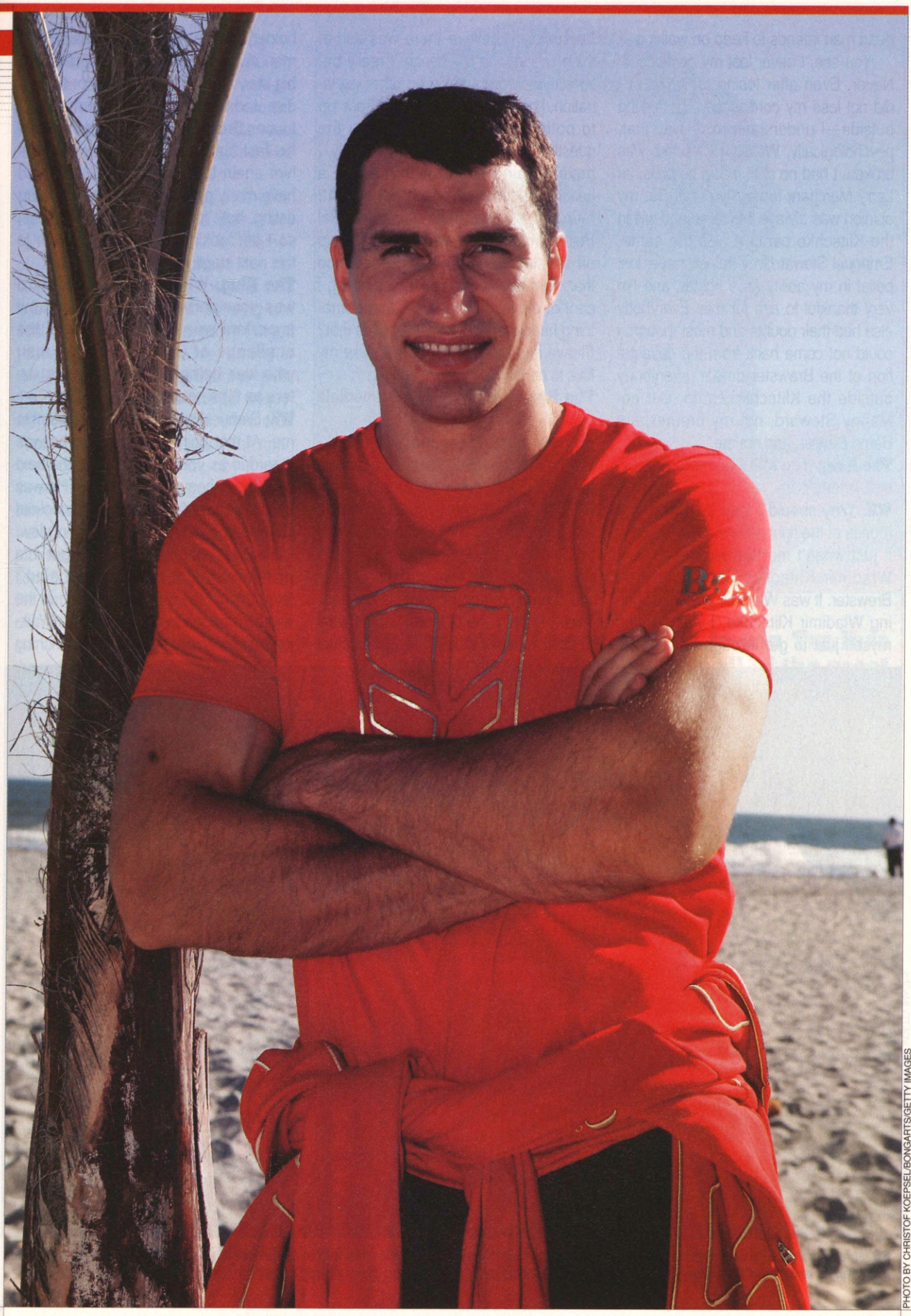


PHOTO BY CHRISTOF KOEPSEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

dead man intends to keep on walking.

You see, I never lost my confidence. Never. Even after losing to Brewster I did not lose my confidence. The feeling outside—I understand this—was that, psychologically, Wladimir Klitschko was broken. I had no chin. I had no balls, as Larry Merchant famously put it. But my opinion was always the same and within the Klitschko camp it was the same. Emanuel Steward, my trainer, never lost belief in my ability as a fighter, and I'm very thankful to him for this. Everybody else had their doubts and most thought I could not come back from the devastation of the Brewster defeat, everybody outside the Klitschko camp. But not Manny Steward, not my brother, not Bernd Boente, and not me.

The Ring: You still believed in yourself totally?

WK: Why should I lose it? I won four rounds of the fight against Brewster, and it just wasn't me that night. It wasn't Wladimir Klitschko fighting Lamon Brewster. It was Wladimir Klitschko fighting Wladimir Klitschko. I was fighting myself just to get through the rounds. Personally, I believe there was something wrong with my health. I really believe this. There can be no other explanation. I had my health checked from top to bottom because I didn't want the question hanging over me. Fortunately, I have nothing wrong with me. I'm a healthy person, thank God. I can go 12 rounds. I showed this against Samuel Peter. Three times I was able to get up off the floor. So something happened that night against Brewster, something I cannot explain, but I know that something happened. Why did I fight like that? I leave it in the past. Better to allow my fists to do the talking from now on.

The Ring: What are your immediate objectives?

WK: My journey, my goal in sports ... you have to have, all the time, a goal. A boxer can very easily become a champion. Yes, he must be talented. He must be dedicated. But it's far more difficult to defend the title after winning. This is what defines the fighter, what defines the champion, and now this is my goal. I want to unify the different titles. I want to fight Nikolay Valuev (the WBA titleholder). I hope (WBC titlist) Hasim Rahman defends his title and becomes a big star, and then I fight him for the undisputed championship. Unfortunately, Lamon Brewster was hurt and injured in his last fight, but I would love to fight him again to set the record straight. I have many opponents who will be interesting, both for me and for boxing fans, so I am looking forward very much to this next stage of my career.

The Ring: While victory over Byrd was your personal redemption, how important was it to you to repel the challenge of Samuel Peter, a man who was being touted in some quarters as "the new Mike Tyson"?

WK: Samuel Peter was very important to me. At that point in his career, he was regarded as young and strong, the next big thing in heavyweight boxing. He was undefeated, self-confident, the knockout showman. I had a different point of view. I felt I was extremely lucky to get into position to fight him, and I'm glad I fought him. He could come again in the future, but, for now, the Dead Man Walking has taken care of the hard-punching

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HEIMANN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Sweet redemption: Klitschko's dominant knockout victory over Chris Byrd in April 2006 to annex the IBF heavyweight strap put him back on top of the heavyweight ratings and was a major step in rebuilding his image.

newcomer, and that's very satisfying.

The Ring: Do you feel that you are now the leading man in heavyweight boxing today, the champion-elect, the man your trainer, Emanuel Steward, always believed was the natural successor to Lennox Lewis?

WK: I don't feel myself as champion right now, no. I know I've won a title fight, but I don't see myself as champion. Not yet. I have to work on it to become the real champion, the man who is universally recognized. Winning one fight, winning a title, this doesn't mean you're the champion. To me, it's important to become the people's champion, the real champion. Look at the heavyweight division and other divisions. There are so many so-called "champions." The boxing community knows these "champions." But go outside this community and no one can tell you who the champion is, the real champion, like Muhammad Ali, Lennox Lewis, Mike Tyson, Sugar Ray Leonard. It doesn't matter what belt you have. To become champion, you need to aspire to the same level as those great names from the past. That's what matters to me. Will I accomplish it? I'd say yes, 100 percent. This is why I do this. This is why I fight.

My next step, I hope, will be to win THE RING championship belt, which all of the great champions down the years have held. I have to get it and, to do this, I must unify the titles. Then I have a chance to be the real champ, not just the champ of a camp, the champion everyone recognizes.

The Ring: When you look at the other alphabet titleholders right now, what is your assessment of guys like Nicolay Valuev, Sergei Liakhovich, and Hasim Rahman?

WK: Nicolay Valuev is not an easy fighter to fight. First of all, I haven't any sparring partners who are the same size *(laughs)*. Where are you going to find them? From a basketball team maybe, but I doubt it. So preparation won't be easy. I respect the fact that he has a belt and that he's defended his title. It doesn't matter that it was against a guy ranked 77 in the world (Owen Beck). His next three or four fights he will probably fight some other Don King fighters. His next fight is supposed to be in the U.S., so let's watch and see what happens with the audience, see if he attracts a lot of interest. He's in boxing history now because there has never been another fighter in history as big as he is. His next fight will be very important to him. He must deliver a good performance.

I think with Rahman and Oleg Maskaev (who were scheduled to contest the WBC title on August 12), each of them could win. Liakhovich, I have known for a long time. We were together as amateurs preparing for the (1996) Olympic Games. We had a camp made up of many nationalities. I think he's a good guy. We sparred together, but we've both moved on and developed as boxers, so there's nothing really to recall about our sessions then. His win against Brewster was a great win for him, and I would definitely love to fight him at some point.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HEIMANN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

"My next step, I hope, will be to win THE RING championship belt, which all of the great champions down the years have held. I have to get it and, to do this, I must unify the titles."

The Ring: As we speak here in Berlin, the city and the whole country is alive with the World Cup and you are following most of the games involving Germany and, of course, your own country, Ukraine.

WK: I'm having so much fun. Germany is alive and vibrant, filled with World Cup fever. The country isn't sleeping. There are so many different nationalities here right now. This is what sport is all about, the way it unifies people from different countries, people all around the world. People here are celebrating the whole time. I've been watching the Germany games and also the matches of Ukraine. I hope the Ukrainians will win (they were knocked out in the quarterfinals by eventual champions Italy). Andrey Shevchenko (Ukraine's star striker) is my friend. I haven't been bug-

ging him because I know, as a sportsman, that you want to be focused at this time, you want to be thinking only of the games and your performance. But I'm supporting both him and the team.

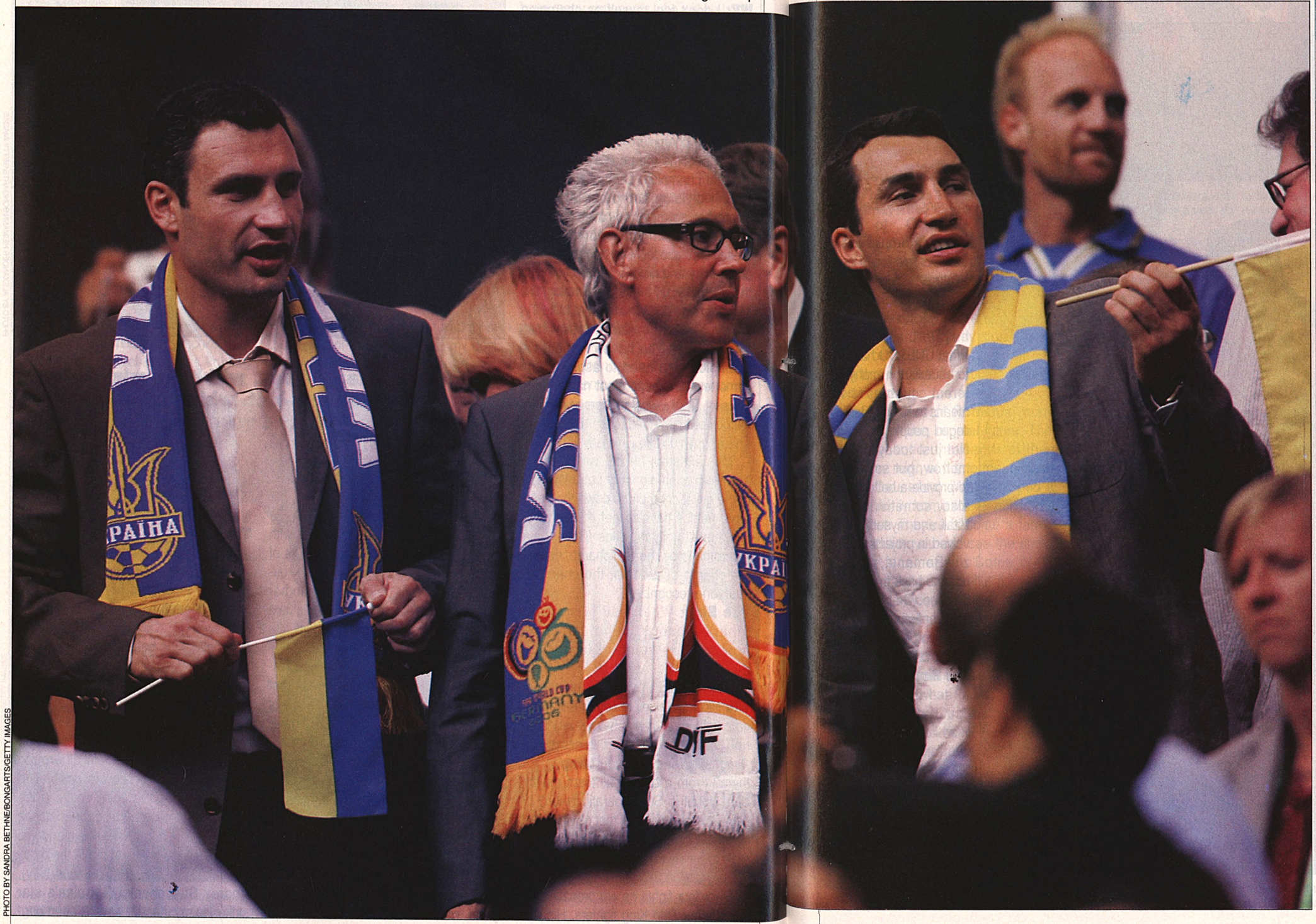
Several months ago he invited me to play in a charity football match. I was the goalkeeper, but I didn't play too good. The other team scored four goals.

An enthusiastic soccer fan, Wladimir (right) attended the World Cup in Germany, along with older brother Vitali (left) and manager Bernd Boente (center, wearing eyeglasses). Unfortunately for the brothers, Ukraine lost to eventual World Cup champion Italy in the quarterfinals.

The Ring: Tell me a little about that charity game, because there was a crowd of about 50,000 inside the San Siro stadium in Milan. For you, what was that experience like?

WK: I was so nervous, waiting to step out onto the pitch, more nervous than for any of my fights, you wouldn't believe it. There were many good players out there and the ball was flying around like a bullet when they moved it into the penalty box to set up a shot. I don't think I will have any future as a goalkeeper once I retire from boxing.

The Ring: The charity work you do, together with Vitali, it's something in which you both are deeply involved. You'll be going to Namibia very soon as part of a UNESCO program to help underprivileged children. What is it



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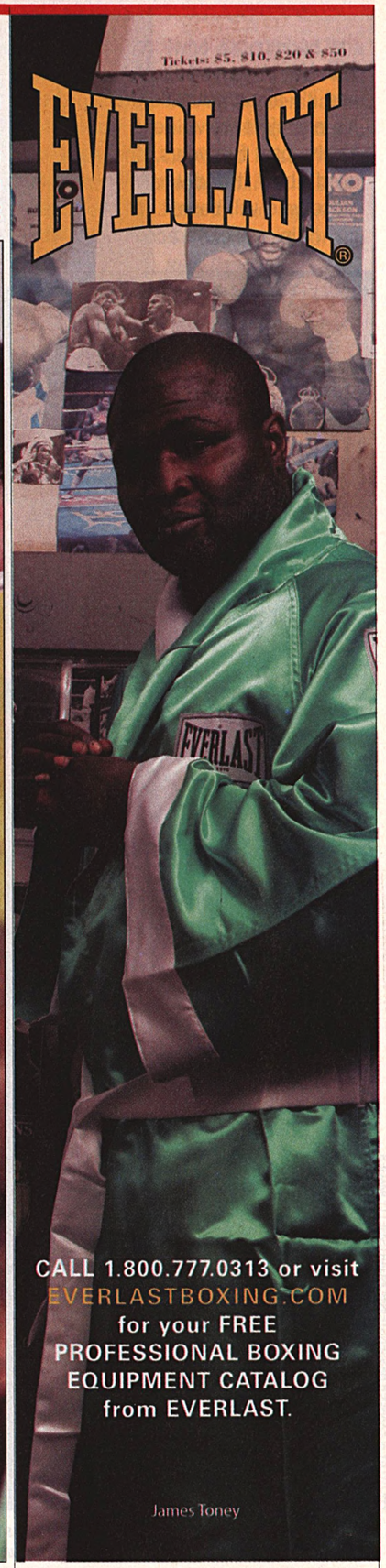

that you are hoping to achieve there?

WK: Yes, I go on August 4 with Vitali, and it's about education for children. It's a project we've been working on for the past five years, and we're excited about it and what it means for those who will benefit. Without financial help, we can't accomplish what we're trying to do, but this is a project that is close to my heart, and we will achieve our objectives. I have no doubt about this. Education is a fundamental of life. It is the key, especially for people in Third World countries, if they are to survive. No education leaves no future. The tribes we are going to visit, some of them are dying out, in the way that some animals and birds are becoming extinct. But these are people, our fellow human beings, and we need to help them.

Some of them have no proper medicine, no real idea about how to survive or how to build for a better future. They have no means. We can teach the children, teach them how to perform different jobs, give them a new perspective about life. Self-help is the key to life, but everyone needs to be helped, from the tiniest baby to the wisest man. We are raising money on behalf of UNESCO to build schools, to build hospitals. Our mission is to put in place the kind of facilities and infrastructure that will be a constant help to these people. What UNESCO has tried to establish in many different countries is the means to help underprivileged people long-term. Not just today and tomorrow, but something to provide a better future also, something real. Vitali and myself are involved in projects in Brazil, Romania, and, of course, back in Ukraine. We see what has been accomplished, and this gives you the drive to try to help others.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

More than just a world-class boxer, Klitschko is a socially aware individual who is using his fame to help others. Along with Vitali, he is working with UNESCO to bring education and hope to underprivileged children around the world.

The Ring: You've been to see the schools in Brazil and Romania. How are they making a difference?

WK: In the project areas in Brazil, you can see the difference they make. In some of these cities, like in Rio de Janeiro, there are areas so dangerous that even children are at risk.

PHOTO BY SERGEI SUPINSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir (second from left) and Vitali (far right) joined Orange Revolution leaders Victor Yushchenko and Yulia Timoshenko at a political rally in Kiev, Ukraine, in December 2004. Wladimir is particularly pleased that it was a bloodless revolution.

There is gang violence, crime, and what the schools do is offer free education and the opportunity to rise out of this spiral that has become normal. One day they can aspire to be something more than they could ever dream of today. Education will give them this chance. I'm such a believer in education.

The children of Romania, many have no families, no real future. They were orphaned, thousands of them (under the reign of the former dictator, Nicolai Causescu). We've helped to build a family home for 45 children in Bucharest. They've become a family, and suddenly you can see the smiles on their faces again. Some of the teachers have become like parents to these children and now they have stability in their lives. They're so happy.

For me, it is a very rewarding to witness this. It is really what life is all about. We can all make a difference, and I'm doing what I can to play my part. You know, this makes me so thankful for what I have. People don't realize what they have. All of us are guilty; we moan about this, we moan about that. These children in Brazil, in Romania, in Namibia, they have nothing, not even clothes to wear, some of them. Through the personal opportunities I was given in life, I was able to aspire toward big goals. But what is it like for those whose minds are on their next lunch, because they don't know if they will eat? I've met people who don't even have bread to eat, and I've talked to them and looked into their eyes. I look at life a little more philosophically now. What may seem bad to us in our world, the way we live, it's not really too bad at all.

The Ring: Has this perspective helped you to overcome your setbacks in boxing, to put them into context, and to move on and build again?

WK: It's very good to experience both sides of the spectrum, a positive mentality and a negative one. Life after sports will be much longer than the life we have in sport. In a way, I feel I have to thank Corrie Sanders for winning our fight (in March 2003, the South African prevailed via devastating second-round knockout). I was having too much success in my sports life. I was Olympic champion, and I held the WBO heavyweight title. Everything was just falling in my hands, and I became bored with the sport. Then I lost, and I began to look at it differently. For me, losing created a new love for the sport. Maybe I realized exactly what I could be throwing away. If I'd kept winning, I know I wouldn't have the attitude, the drive, and the hunger that I have now.

Life is interesting. You lose something, but you win something. Something happens, like with my brother (who succumbed to a series of injuries that ultimately persuaded him to retire), and you can't do it anymore. Now boxing is a big love for me again, so, Corrie, thanks for the loss *(laughs)*.

The Ring: The Orange Revolution in Ukraine was a movement with which both Vitali and you identified yourselves very visibly. Vitali even wore an orange scarf, the symbol of the revolution, when he fought Danny Williams in December 2004. But for the new president, Victor Yushchenko, and for the people of your homeland, the transition has not been without its problems. How has life changed for the people?

WK: I continue to support the democracy. The Orange Revolution was a peaceful moment for the Ukrainian people and a great step, a giant step. In Russia, if something goes wrong, the people can be brutally cleared from the street. But ours was a peaceful moment, a peaceful revolution. There was no big blood, thank God. People openly expressed their opinions and not a single drop of blood [was shed], maybe a couple of bruises under the eye, but this was such an important development for our country. Now some people are disappointed about the Orange Revolution, but this is wrong, I believe. It wasn't about political parties or politicians. It was about a peaceful moment in the history of our country, a moment that had to happen.

The Ring: Just as you always believed that you would be vindicated as a fighter, despite the depths to which you were plunged.

WK: I've learnt a lot in my short life. For me now, it's all about producing the performance, then people will accept you. You have to be a *champion*. I keep coming back to that word. ■

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Jan. 1984: Pryor-Arguello II. Plus: Mancini-Chacon, Gerry Coetzee, Nino LaRocca, Ray Mancini.

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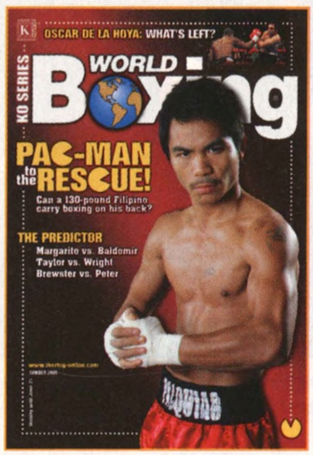

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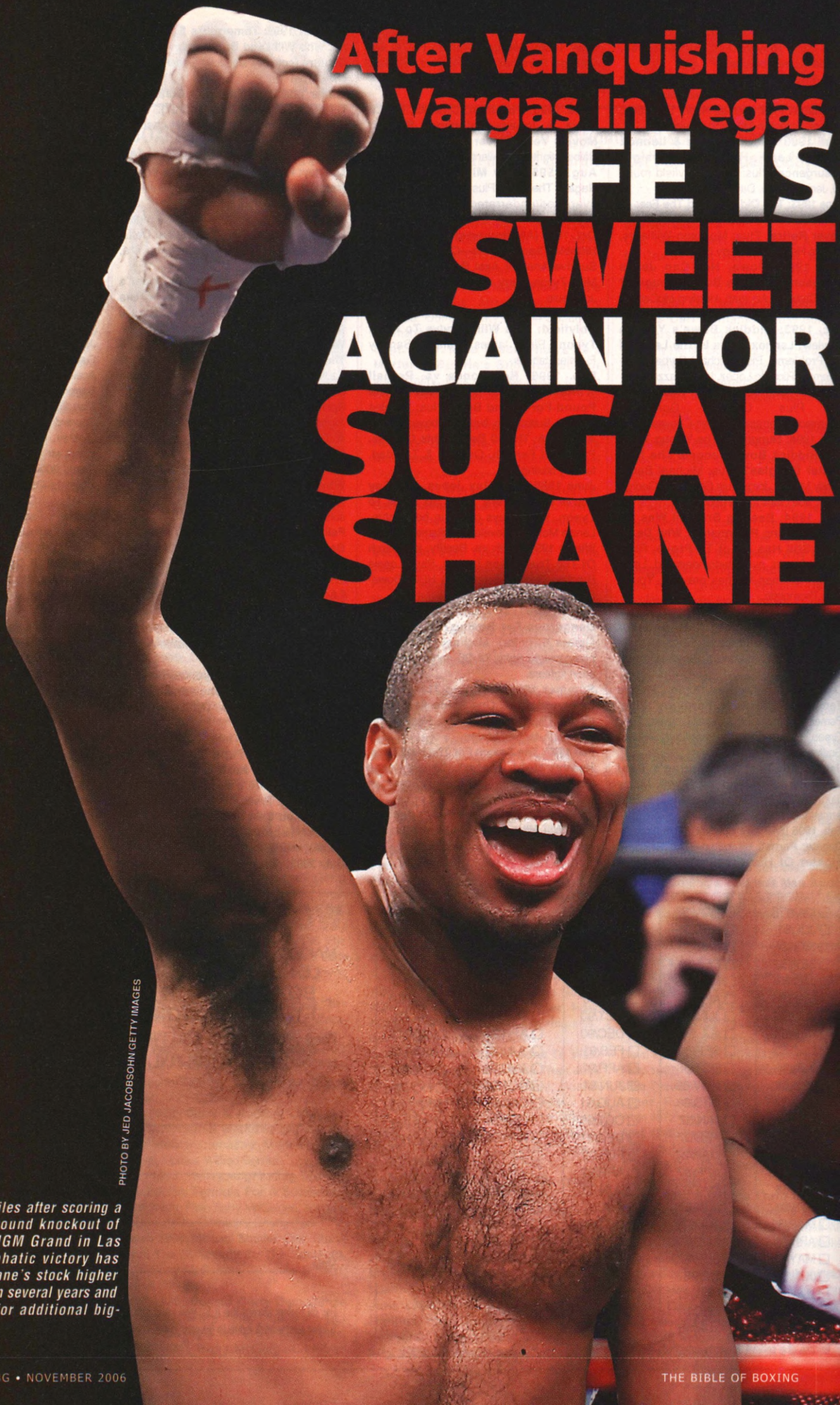

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Mosley is all smiles after scoring a dramatic sixth-round knockout of Vargas at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. The emphatic victory has raised Sugar Shane's stock higher than it has been in several years and positioned him for additional big-money fights.

By Don Stradley

Thanks to a blockbuster of a left hook that left Fernando Vargas flat on his back, Shane Mosley's career has taken a significant turn for the better. It was a memorable punch, the sort that becomes a staple of HBO's tape library. It was such a good shot that it didn't even land flush; it seemed to catch Vargas on the wrong side of the face as he was walking into it. If Mosley were a baseball player, he'd have said that he didn't get all of the wood on the ball, that it just carried out of the ballpark. Vargas rose from the knockdown and stood groggily, as if he'd just stepped out of a carnival tilt-a-whirl. He absorbed a few more punches until referee Kenny Bayless stopped the bout at 2:38 of the sixth round.

That Mosley defeated Vargas wasn't a surprise. The surprise is that Mosley was quicker on his feet and sharper with his punches than he'd been in years. We half-expected HBO's Larry Merchant to present Mosley with flowers during the post fight interview. Merchant has always been a Mosley booster—he once said Mosley's smile was as bright as Julia Roberts', and we'll never forget the face Merchant pulled in 2002 when Vernon Forrest, a fighter distinctly unlike Julia Roberts, handed Mosley his first defeat. We can't blame Merchant. There was a time when Mosley had a Roy Jones, Floyd Mayweather type of aura, minus the arrogance. To think that he's regained his form can only be good news.

The news is especially good for Golden Boy Promotions. The GBP triumvirate of Oscar De La Hoya, Bernard Hopkins, and Mosley has won major fights this year, and that gives the firm a boost. Hopkins is probably done fighting, but Oscar and Shane are in positions to make big dough for themselves and the company. The day after Mosley-Vargas II, it was announced that Golden Boy Promotions was joining up with Winky Wright's promotional group. The juggernaut keeps growing. It has long been imagined that no one could fill the void in boxing promotions once Don King and Bob Arum stepped down, but Oscar's group is growing into the role, and Mosley's win came at the perfect time to keep their momentum going. Still, even if Mosley is suddenly hotter than

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Mosley jams a solid left jab into Vargas' face during his most impressive performance in some time. The (basically) one-punch kayo of Vargas has some wondering if Mosley has turned into the knockout artist he was at lightweight.

July, we can't help but ask a few questions. When a guy scores his first knockout in five years, we're bound to start pondering things. For instance ...

Does Mosley still have it at age 35, or was he lucky to be fighting Vargas?

When Joe Goossen was training Mosley in 2004, he told THE RING that Vargas was made for Mosley. By 2006, however, Vargas would be a sitting duck for almost any good junior middleweight. "Shane looked great, but he was basically fighting a guy who wasn't there," said HBO's Jim Lampley. "I'm still not seeing from Shane Mosley the kind of fluid combination punching he once produced."

Lampley's broadcast partner Emanuel Steward was more optimistic, saying, "It was a combination of both. Shane was a true warrior, and he's a little warrior, so a big factor has been his getting comfortable in a weight class. When he realized Vargas wasn't a threat, he took it to him. I liked what I saw."

To Mosley's credit, he wasn't overly cautious, he didn't showboat, and he didn't carry Vargas. He did what a fighter is supposed to do when facing a faded opponent—he dominated. Those wanting to put an extra shine on it can point to Vargas' last victim, Javier Castillejo, who defeated Felix Sturm for the WBA middleweight belt the same night as Mosley-Vargas II. Castillejo's win gave a smidgeon of credence to those, and there were many, who backed Vargas.

Is Mosley a puncher again?

The punch that ended Vargas' hopes had a highlight reel finality about it, but let's not start thinking of Mosleys a kayo artist again. Vargas, having suffered two violent kayo losses in the past, was simply done in by a punch he didn't see. Mosley has, however, regained some of his old hand speed and movement. When a guy has speed and accuracy, that's when the knockouts start coming.

"When I was in the ring, I remembered watching Oscar fight Vargas, and he threw that perfect left hook," Mosley said. "I was bouncing around, and I saw the opportunity, and I threw the perfect left hook."

Steward once said that there are some fighters who are actually more dangerous when on their toes than flat-footed. He pointed to De La Hoya and Ray Robinson as fighters who could hit with power while moving. We'll add Muhammad Ali to the short list—he nearly decapitated Oscar Bonavena with a hook from his toes, while in his later, flatfooted years, he couldn't hurt anybody. Some fighters just have better timing when on their toes, and Mosley may be one of them.

"He's been a little insecure since those rough fights with Winky Wright, but this time he had a little jig, he was loose, and had a different look," said Steward.

Mosley isn't going to kayo everyone, but if he fights someone like Mayweather, it's nice to know Sugar Shane can still crack hard enough to maybe win a 10-8 round here and there.

Did Mosley reuniting with his father make a difference?

It sure seemed to. Gone was the workman-like performer of 2005. In his place was a fast, inspired fighter. Maybe a little time away from Papa Jack was helpful. The elder Mosley seems like a good guy, but he's also a typical boxing father. This era in boxing is unusual because it's unprecedented to have so many elite fighters trained by their fathers. At times, Mosley isn't far removed from the 10-year-old letting his dad lace up his gloves. Merchant told HBO.com, "Shane is sort of an innocent who let his father impose himself, and kept going, seemingly oblivious because he loves what he does and has very high expectations of himself." According to Goossen, "Shane's biggest problem is that he tries to make too many people happy."

For now, Shane and his dad seem to have found a way to work together. "We were in the gym working real hard, and he was very inspirational not only to me, but to everyone in the camp," Mosley said. Good for them. But there's a difference between being a good trainer and a good cornerman. Jack might be able to motivate his son in the gym, but he's not a strategic genius. He also strikes us as a guy who doesn't want any outside interference, so that means a Freddie Roach or a Buddy McGirt couldn't be brought in for some fine-tuning. That's why the father-son arrangement is such a slippery slope. On the other hand, Shane has become a millionaire and a multiple-title winner with Jack as his trainer. As far as father-son teams, they are one of the more successful ones.

Is the money at 147 or 154 pounds?

There's plenty of competition at 154. Cory Spinks, Roman Karmazin, Daniel Santos, and Kassim Ouma are all talented fighters. But none of them amount to squat at the box office. Spinks' promoter, Don King, has already started placing phone calls to De La Hoya, but even though the crafty but harmless Spinks has an alphabet belt, we just can't picture Mosley wasting his time with him. Ironically, Mosley finally looked comfortable at 154, but he may have to drop down to find big fights.

At 147 pounds, Mosley can fight Mayweather, Carlos Baldomir, or Antonio Margarito. Those are pretty good paydays and pretty big gates. Another possibility could be HBO's latest acquisition, Ricky Hatton. Hatton struggled in his welterweight debut against Luis Collazo, so his people might hesitate to match him with a revamped Mosley. Still, Hatton is plucky and wants to fight everybody. If Mosley's word means anything, one of his post-fight comments was, "Mayweather and Hatton. That's about it." Sounds good to us.

How realistic is Mosley-Mayweather?

HBO had a November date open for a Mayweather bout, and Mayweather is still hedging as to who his opponent might be, but Mosley is at the stage where he fights twice a year and doesn't like to be rushed. November might be out, but there's always next year.

"When you see someone like Larry Merchant pumping for the fight, and with Golden Boy Promotions increasing as a force, there is a strong possi-

VARGAS FADING FAST

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Vargas was a sad sight at the end

The swollen eye that caused him to lose to Shane Mosley back in February was actually a reprieve for Fernando Vargas. It allowed him to stir up some controversy and fight a rematch. He earned around $3-million for fighting Mosley again, plus a percentage of the pay-per-view. It was a nice payday for a guy who came into the MGM Grand Garden ring in Las Vegas with nothing. Observers described his prefight mood as sullen and distracted.

"His was the quietest dressing room I've ever visited prior to a fight," said Jim Lampley.

The bulging disc in his back that Vargas has talked about for years was obviously hampering him. Danny Smith, Vargas' trainer, said, "Fernando looked slow. I don't know if it was the weight or what, but he wasn't able to utilize the jab or move his head."

By the fifth, Vargas was bleeding from a cut over his right eye. Mosley, 43-4 (37) with 1 no-contest, was finding his rhythm, and the 9,722 in attendance knew Vargas was in trouble. Typically of Vargas, he disagreed. "I thought I was doing well until the left hook," he said. "I thought it was slowly going my way. I didn't see the left hook until I saw it on the replay."

Hopefully, Vargas will watch the entire replay so he can see what the rest of us saw: an empty shell of a fighter. We all know "El Feroz" will fight bravely until the heavens part, but there's no reason for him to continue. The fires that made him a compelling fighter at age 20 seem dampened at age 28. Vargas, 26-4 (22), may convince himself that draining his body to make weight was the real problem, and he may return at 160 pounds. He can fight a few easy marks on the West Coast and hear the cheers once again. Either that, or, by this time next year, he'll be kayoed by a no-name middleweight.

—D.S.

bility," said Lampley. "I saw nothing that convinced me Shane Mosley could beat Mayweather, but there are plenty of people who think otherwise. In fact, I may be in the minority."

Mayweather told *The New York Times*, "He earned the right to fight me by getting a spectacular knockout, but I've been chasing Shane Mosley for 10 years." He continued, "I got to talk to Jin (Shane's wife); she runs the show. We can make the fight happen. She's the boss of their household."

When Merchant asked Mosley about a possible bout with Mayweather, he seemed more concerned with a loose tooth. We suspect Mosley won't make a decision to fight Mayweather until De La Hoya decides if he wants Mayweather for himself. Poor Shane. He acts as his own manager, but, between his wife, his dad, and De La Hoya, Goossen's comment about Mosley's desire to please too many people sure sounds relevant.

Has Mosley become the star we thought he'd be?

He's probably more popular than a lot of us realize. The $3.5-million (plus a PPV percentage) he earned for fighting Vargas may not match the barbaric

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Jack's back. For the first time since back-to-back losses to Winky Wright in 2004, Mosley was trained by his father. If the outcome of the Vargas rematch is any indicator, their reunion has been a very good thing. Shane said he was "inspired" by having his father back in his corner.

wealth accumulated by De La Hoya, but it's a big chunk of money. No, Mosley can't sell out football stadiums. But so what. Not many fighters do. We shouldn't smear Mosley just because he's not Julio Cesar Chavez.

One way to measure a fighter's stardom is this: A fighter is a star if he remains more popular than the fighters who beat him. De La Hoya, for instance, remains more popular than Mosley even though Mosley has two wins over him. Conversely, Mosley remains more popular than his conquerors, Forrest and Wright. As far as fighters go, Mosley is A List. He doesn't have to fight in his hometown to sell tickets, and he doesn't have to talk trash and sign up with a hip-hop producer to get street cred. Someone was buying those Mosley-Vargas pay-per-views, and they couldn't have all been Vargas fans.

The rematch sold approximately 350,000 pay-per-views, about 60,000 less than the first fight, but still enough to generate $17.5-million in revenue.

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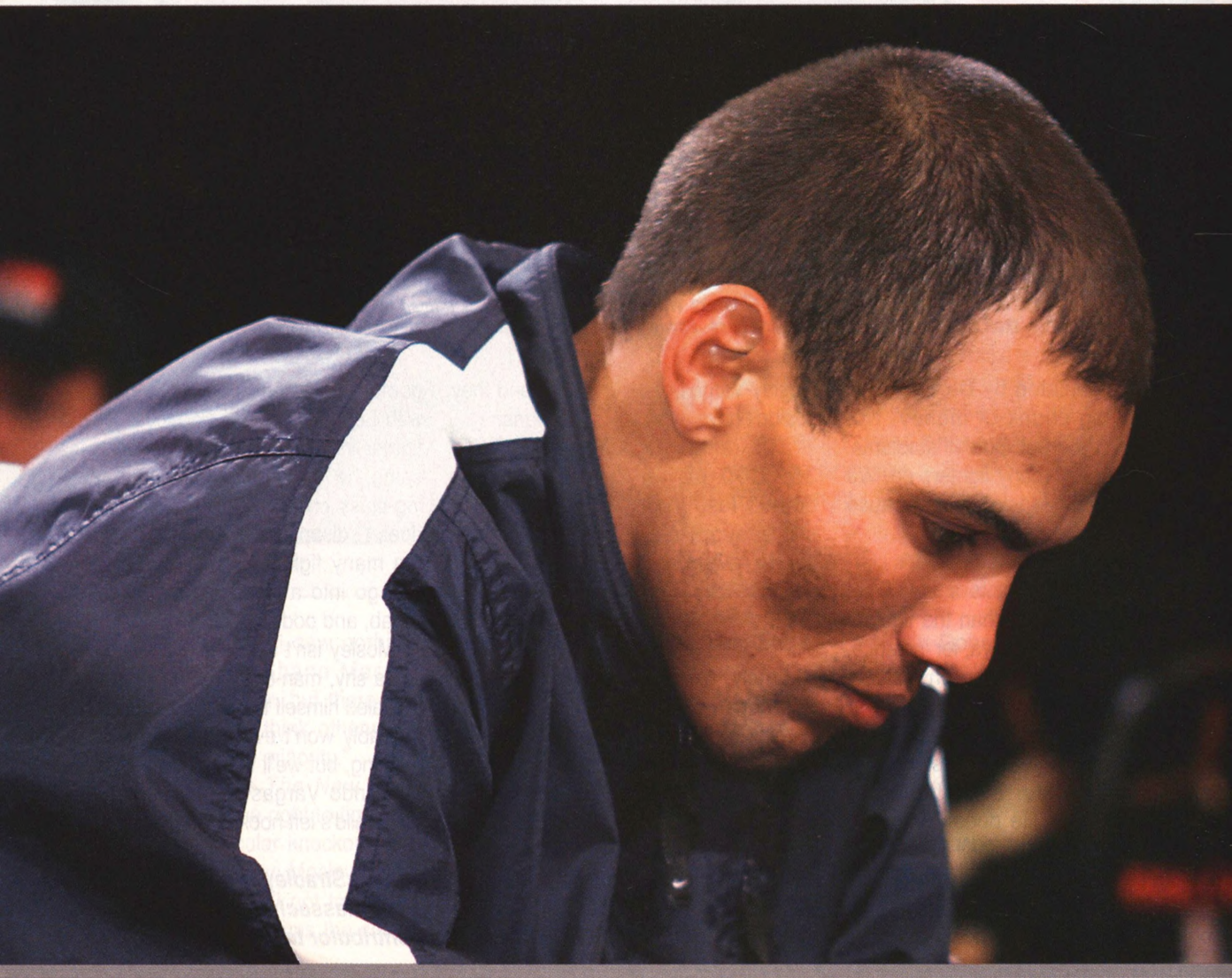
Lately, we feel we know Mosley a little better. For a while it was hopeful to think of De La Hoya and Mosley as millennium versions of the glamorous welterweights of the 1980s. But Mosley didn't start his career with a gold medal and a ton of publicity. He fought exclusively in California sometimes for as little as $2,500 a fight. Mosley probably has more in common with Bob Montgomery and Beau Jack than he does with Leonard and De La Hoya. He's a fighter in a very basic sense. He wins some, he loses some. Like those working-class champions of the 1940s, he doesn't disappear after a loss. Think of the many fighters who lose one fight and go into a tailspin of car crashes, rehab, and odd behavior.

Mosley isn't like that. He may seem like a shy, man-child, but he's gradually revealed himself to be a gritty fighter. He probably won't ever dominate a board meeting, but we'll take him as he is. As Fernando Vargas would tell you, the man-child's left hook is fully grown. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to this magazine.

SHOULD CASTILLO BEAR ALL THE WEIGHT?

A Comprehensive Look At Boxing's Latest Fiasco



By David Mayo

PHOTOS BY RICK GUZMAN

As their aborted trilogy devolved into a humorless fat joke with Diego Corrales unwilling to absorb the punch line again, Jose Luis Castillo bore the weight in so many ways, literal and figurative. Above all, the purported lightweight from Mexico and those immediately around him bear the brunt of responsibility for ending an unforgettable series unforgivably, enormous financial loss to all parties, massive ticket refunds, and a lawsuit seeking millions in damages, all because of his unprofessional second consecutive failure to get within a barrel of burritos of the 135-pound limit to fight Corrales.

Yet the classic remaining conspiratorial question in all things politic—Who knew what, and when did they know it?—remains unanswered to the satisfaction of all involved. Some key parties addressed it immediately after Castillo-Corrales III was canceled on the eve of the June 3 fight date, then declined to go farther when it became clear they

The moment of truth: As all the interested parties look on, Castillo sucks in his stomach and steps on the scales. A moment later, gasps of distress and amazement filled the air when it was announced that he weighed 139½ pounds, 4½ pounds over the lightweight limit.

Castillo was so weak from his failed attempt to make weight that he had to be helped up from the floor of the stage by one of his handlers. Even if he had somehow managed to make weight, Castillo may have been too drained to put up much of a fight.

may be under oath next time the question is posed, and that Castillo might not bear that burden alone.

Promoter Bob Arum insisted he was as blind-sided as anyone by the 139½-pound Castillo's abhorrent failure to come anywhere close to the limit. Corrales and his promoter, Gary Shaw, countered with a lawsuit seeking almost $22-million in real and punitive damages from the rival promoter and fighter, saying Arum's denial was implausible, particularly considering Castillo's near-identical weight failure in Castillo-Corrales II.

That, more than anything, was the appalling part. Corrales and Castillo etched their names together in history with their May 7, 2005, epic, won by Corrales on a 10th-round stoppage after some tactical mouthpiece spitting. But the remainder of their history will be remembered for Castillo's struggles with weight—or lack thereof, as Corrales complained—including coming in 3½ pounds overweight for their October 2005 rematch.

Their unfortunate historical revision now will recall their unfinished tie-breaker almost as vividly as the high drama they produced in 14 brutal rounds and two fights.

Another man who shares common history with both fighters said there was no other choice.

"You can't go into the ring at that kind of weight disadvantage," pound-for-pound king Floyd Mayweather said. "This is a hurt business. If you have two championship-level fighters in two different weight classes, the smaller guy is taking most of the risk of getting hurt. Corrales never should've taken the risk the first time."

At press time, Castillo faced a yet-unscheduled Nevada Athletic Commission disciplinary hearing, with early-August a likely target date, in which he faced penalties of up to $250,000 and/or license suspension or revocation.

But, according to the World Boxing Council, the group conducting the hearing should bear some of the responsibility.

The Mexico City-based alphabet group monitored Castillo's weight during the month preceding the fight, found him to be outside contractual guidelines, and claimed to have told both Arum and the Nevada State Athletic Commission of the problem.

Still, the WBC's criticism of Nevada might be unfounded, since the commission has no specific statutory empowerment for prefight weight monitoring, and, in fact, stepped beyond its normal boundaries long before the fight to gain personal assurance from Castillo that he indeed would make weight.

As for Arum, he claimed periodic reports from Fernando Beltran in Mexico indicated Castillo was on target. Beltran, who is either Castillo's manager or co-promoter—a point of contention Shaw also wants the Nevada commission to address in alleging Beltran may be being used to shield some of Castillo's purses from U.S. taxes—did not return telephone messages seeking comment.

But Arum was livid for weeks after losing the main event, which resulted in about 8,000 ticket refunds to fans dissatisfied by the prospect of a Vic Darchinyan-Luis Maldonado flyweight headliner. The rest of the show came off as scheduled, but fewer than 3,000 attended at cavernous Thomas &

Mack Center in Las Vegas.

"It was one of the most unprofessional, inexcusable things I've ever seen, for any fighter at this level to come in so overweight, twice in a row, that it appears he didn't make an effort," Arum said. "It was one of the most embarrassing things I've ever gone through as a promoter."

Everyone was angry in the aftermath. When Castillo apologized to him, Corrales said, "I wanted to hit him in the mouth." Arum berated Castillo as the fighter stood and listened. Corrales complained that if Castillo knew he was so far overweight, they could have talked it out days ahead of time and reached a new weight agreement. Shaw alleged conspiracy. And Keith Kizer, the new executive director of the Nevada commission, who walked into the Mayweather-Zab Judah fiasco when he took the post in May, had yet another controversy to address.

"To come in at 139½ is mind-boggling to me," Kizer said. "I can't imagine any scenario where a fighter should be 4½ pounds over on the scale, because if he's that far over, he has to know it in advance, and he needs to tell us he can't make weight, he isn't close, and the fight needs to be renegotiated, or canceled, or a replacement opponent found. And, in this case, there wasn't even a need for a replacement, because if Mr. Corrales had known about the problem a week ahead of time, he would have been willing to make the fight at 140."

For conspiracy theorists, including Shaw and the rest of twice-bitten, thrice-shy Team Corrales, there was plenty to consider.

First was Castillo's recent history of weight issues, and not just in the two Corrales incidents. In the fight immediately preceding his pair of 2002 fights against Mayweather, Castillo weighed 150. In three fights immediately thereafter, he ranged from 145 to 147 pounds. He has not made the 135-pound limit since his first fight with Castillo.

Second was the WBC's claim that it monitored Castillo's weight in accordance with the fight contract, and he failed to meet requirements that he be no more than 148½ pounds a month before the fight, nor more than 141¾ two weeks before. Top Rank and the Nevada commission failed to take action when warned, the WBC claimed.

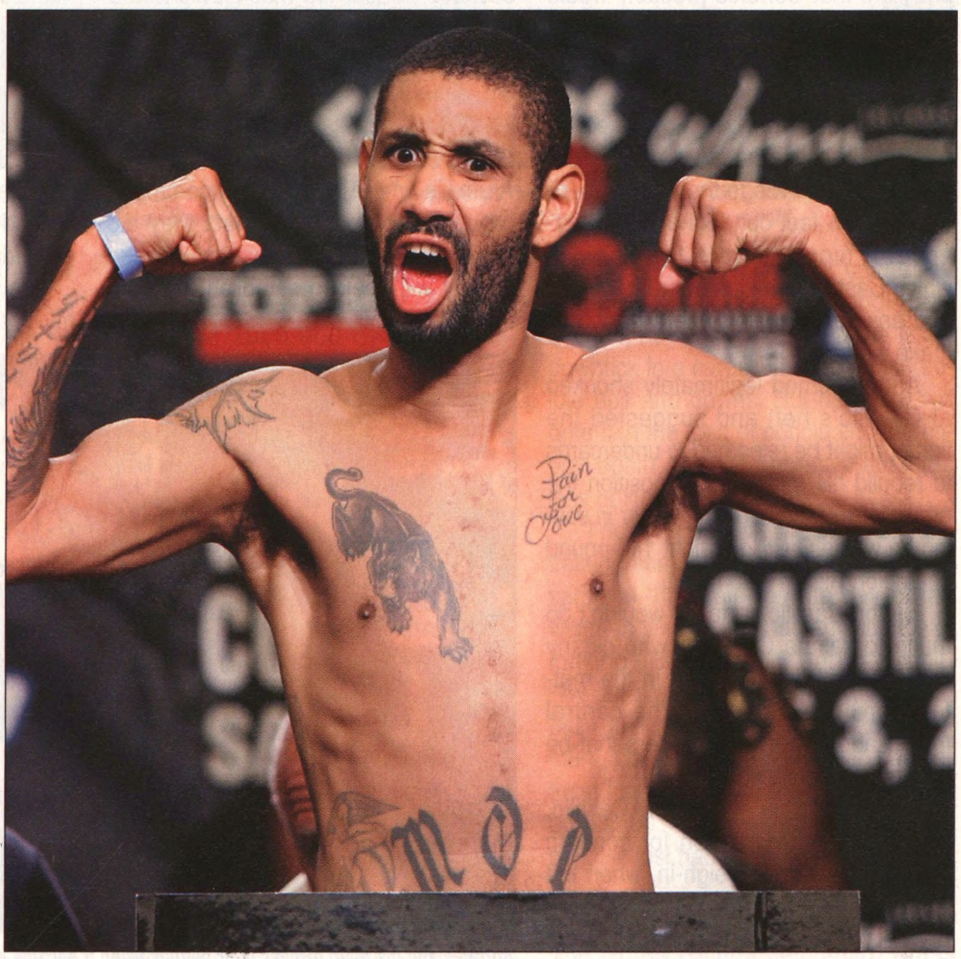
Most of all, it is an enormous leap of faith to believe that any championship fighter can be 4½ pounds overweight at the scale with no one in his camp aware of the problem.

"It's ludicrous to believe no one had any idea about any of this until Castillo came down from the Mexican mountaintop," Shaw said. "They defrauded the boxing public, and they defrauded Diego Corrales. There has to be some accountability if anyone is going to have any faith in promoters, or regulators, or something as simple as the integrity of the weight divisions. Diego is 6' tall, and he made 135. It wasn't easy. He sweated and worked. And he didn't get paid. We shouldn't be injured because the other guy didn't want to make the same sacrifices."

On the other side, the natural inclination when a prominent fighter is struggling with weight is to save the show and expect his professionalism to prevail. Because fighters who don't make weight risk not fighting and not getting paid, it is largely a self-policing endeavor.

"These are professional athletes," Kizer said. "Their responsibility is to do the right thing. Most do, without prompting. Unfortunately, in this case, Mr. Castillo didn't."

There also is a case to be made that all this was just a true effort gone sour.



A fired-up Corrales flexes his biceps after making the division limit of 135 pounds. He said later that he would have agreed to fight Castillo at a higher weight if he'd been contacted a week or so prior to the weigh-in.

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

This is what happened to Corrales when he agreed to fight an overweight Castillo in their second fight. It was, therefore, easy to understand why "Chico" didn't want to take the same risk again.

Castillo had to know after their second fight that Corrales probably would not make the same mistake again, and had no motivation to subject himself to the substantial financial penalty and loss of future revenue he now faces.

Nevada, while not physically sending representatives to the Otero Mountains, did in fact conduct a teleconference, a month before the fight, in which Castillo participated from Mexico and assured commissioners he would make weight.

Arum seemed legitimately shocked at Castillo's heft and suggested the fighter might be relegated to undercards to rebuild his reputation, a position the promoter revised soon thereafter in saying he wants Castillo to fight 140-pound champion Ricky Hatton next.

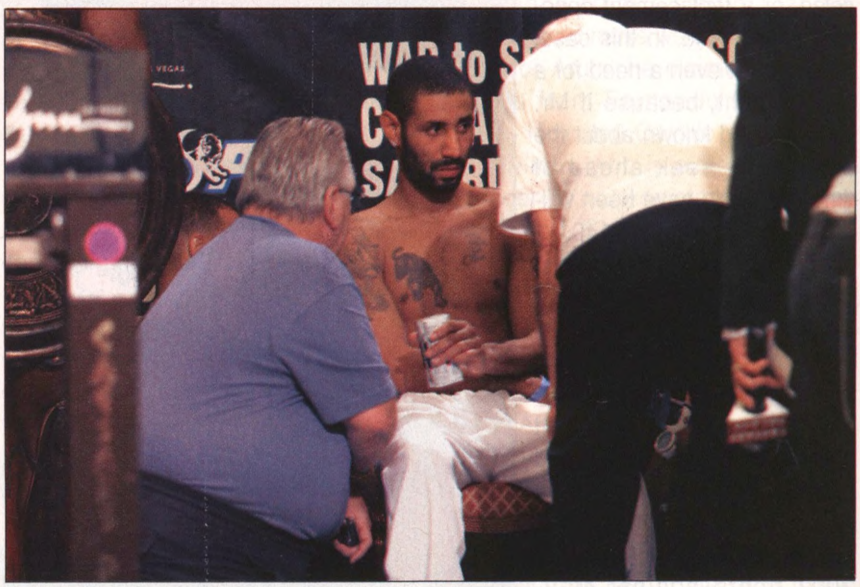
Hatton-Castillo certainly wouldn't do much to satiate Corrales, who clearly was the most injured party in the matter, nor does it address the central theme about when the powers-that-be knew a problem existed.

Tiburcio Garcia, who trains Castillo, said he saw little reason for concern until the day of the weigh-in, when the fighter was 3½ pounds overweight after drying out overnight. If what Garcia says is true, then Castillo gained weight as the day progressed. Even if Castillo's metabolism had shut down because he lost too much weight in a brief period, Garcia had to be aware of that situation as training camp progressed.

Whether that information was accurately relayed to Beltran, and then to Arum, is where the lines of communication broke down—if in fact they did break down. Shaw's conspiracy-based lawsuit will seek to establish the contrary viewpoint.

If Castillo's weight was merely a mistake in judgment by the athlete and his trainer, it was grotesque enough to miss by an entire weight division The equivalent in baseball would be to allow one team only eight at-bats, or, in football, to give one offense a 90-yard field, and Corrales proved unwilling to work against such a handicap again.

"It was a decision about my life and my livelihood," Corrales said. "I gave



Corrales and his team discuss their options when it became clear that Castillo was not going to make weight. The fight could have gone on if Corrales wanted, but he decided not to risk his health again, as he had done in their second bout, when Castillo knocked him out after failing to make weight.

Corrales' promoter, Gary Shaw, informs the media that the fight was off, as Castillo's promoter, Bob Arum, stands by looking very glum. Since then, Shaw has filed lawsuits against Arum and Castillo. Arum, however, seemed genuinely shocked when Castillo failed to make weight.

all the fans what they wanted in the second fight, but that's like letting your opponent come into the ring with an extra weapon. He didn't try to make weight, he didn't care about making weight, and he just hoped I would take the fight again. But I had to consider my family and my personal well-being."

Corrales and Shaw are seeking $10-million apiece in punitive damages, along with Corrales' $1.2-million purse and $750,000 in real damages claimed by Shaw, in their lawsuit. While those may be pie-in-the-sky numbers, the legal action, along with Shaw's allegation that Arum uses Beltran to protect Castillo from U.S. taxes, could make for juicy testimony if it ever actually hits a courtroom.

Arum has acknowledged previously that Castillo is compensated, in part, by Mexican television funds that never enter the U.S., including for both fights against Mayweather. According to contracts filed with the Nevada commission, Castillo was to have been compensated $900,000 by Top Rank. Whether additional funds are subject to federal taxation, even if received from non-U.S. entities, as partial compensation for work performed in the U.S., is what Shaw wants Nevada to examine.

"The IRS is highly represented at every major fight in Nevada," Kizer said. "They do a very good job, and if there are deals that are structured improperly, I'm sure they'll be happy to address that."

At the end of the day, the tax investigators, if spurred into action, will have to concentrate on past dealings, because none of the money changed hands this time. It was merely an enormous loss for everyone involved.

Castillo has to rebuild his career and might not have time, nearing age 33, to restore the boxing public's faith in him.

As for Corrales, who turned 29 in August and has fought all comers at 130 and 135 pounds throughout this decade, he will recover from the latest downtick in a career marked by incredible ups and downs. But he never will entertain the idea of concluding the trilogy again and will regret forever the loss boxing fans suffered.

"I don't know what was happening in training camp, but there's no way they came to the scale, on the day of the weigh-in, thinking he had any chance of making 135 pounds," Corrales said. "We all sat down and talked about it, but I just had to use my better judgment. Canceling the fight wasn't something I wanted to do, but the man didn't do his job. That's all that had to happen. He just had to do his job." ■

David Mayo covers boxing for The Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

IT'S ALL AD-ING UP FOR PAC-MAN

He's Everything To Everybody In The Phillpines

By Ted Lerner

Within a day of Manny Pacquiao's methodical 12-round dismantling of a game Oscar Larios, the teeming streets of old Manila were awash with bootleg CDs of the fight. On one particular overcrowded street corner, a fly-by-night vendor was showing the fight on a small color television set. A dozen or so people had gathered around and were glued to the action. They shouted in glee when their hero attacked and landed a combination. They groaned when Larios caught Pacquiao flush in the third round. And they cheered lustily when Pacquiao knocked down Larios in the seventh and 12th rounds. No doubt when it

Pacquiao's popularity in his native land has reached epic proportions. He's far more than just a successful boxers, and his face is everywhere in the Philippines, endorsing a mind-boggling series of products, ranging from detergent to fried chicken.

PHOTO BY ROMERO GACAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

was over, and Pac-Man had been declared a unanimous decision winner, many went off to celebrate as heartily as they had the day before.

That they had all probably seen the fight only 24 hours earlier didn't seem to make any difference to these folks. For like the rest of the Philippines, and to Filipinos spread out around the globe, Pac-Man fever continues unabated.

To Filipinos, Pacquiao is no different than the wickedest, wildest, amusement park ride. Filled with frenetic action, ups and downs, plenty of frights and pure ecstasy, and, lately, always a successful conclusion, the Pac-Man Express careens seemingly all over the place, eliciting shouts and screams and bringing out the childlike wonder in even the most jaded. It doesn't matter whether you're an active participant riding in the front row or just gazing from afar, it's a ride you simply can't ignore or take your eyes off.

PHOTO BY ROMERO GACAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Former WBC super bantamweight titleholder Oscar Larios gave Pacquiao a tougher than expected fight. But after getting buzzed in the third round, Pac-Man stormed back to take control of the bout, score a pair of knockdowns, and win a unanimous 12-round decision.

It's a feel good wave that only the wild success of one of their own can bring, and one that temporarily carries Filipinos away from daily realities of a Third World economy and terminally ill politics. As a result, Pacquiao, whether real, copied, or virtual, is literally everywhere one looks and listens. One minute you see him visiting some mayor and participating in a tickertape parade. Then he's at the Presidential palace receiving kudos from President Gloria Arroyo and being crowned "Champion For Life." Next, you catch him on a daytime variety TV show. Or on the news, giving an interview from the swank offices of his new promotional company, Manny Pacquiao Promotions.

If all this gets you hungry and you wander into a McDonald's, you will be greeted by life-size, cardboard cutouts of Pacquiao sinking his teeth into a leg of fried chicken. For a small extra fee, you can cool yourself off in the hot and humid tropical weather by purchasing a cardboard hand fan shaped like a boxing glove. It even comes printed with Pacquiao's signature.

Out on the roads, nearly every other billboard features Pacquiao promoting one product or another. From real estate—"A Champion Investment"—to coffee, socks, beer, gin, car batteries, hamburgers, and hardware, Pacquiao seems to have taken over the economy. Cell phone-mad Filipinos can download Manny Pacquiao wallpaper and logos. His music is on the radio. His life story, *The Manny Pacquiao Story*, is showing in movie theaters nationwide. Even ordinary scuffles on the police blotter are attributed to one of the participants being "a Manny Pacquiao fan."

He's Manny the Mexican basher, Manny the promoter, Manny the would-be politician, Manny the movie star, Manny the pitchman. Is there anything this guy can't do?

"This is a phenomenon that is marked by a commercial dimension like I've never seen before," said journalist Ronnie Nathanielsz, who has covered Philippine boxing for more than 40 years. "With all those advertisements on Pacquiao's trunks, he looks like a Formula 1 race car."

"Manny Pacquiao is big business," said Dong Secuya, owner of the unofficial "official" Manny Pacquiao Web site, mannypacquiao.ph, where news stories involving Pacquiao from around the globe are catalogued daily and fans duke it out in virtual forums. "He's like the golden goose. All the pressure is on his shoulders. From the highest to the lowest person, all are expecting something from him."

Secuya believes that one of the major contributing factors behind Pacquiao's meteoric popularity has been the Internet. More than eight million Filipinos live and work overseas, and the Internet has allowed fans everywhere to feel like they are part of the ride. In the days leading up to the fight, Secuya's site received more than 25,000 visitors a day. Even on an average day, the site gets 11,000 visitors.

"There's no doubt that the fast and

wide nature of the Internet has helped the myth of Manny Pacquiao," he said. "We get Filipinos from all over the world visiting our site and participating in the forums. We even get lots of Mexicans.

"It is something new for Filipinos to have a Manny Pacquiao. We're looking for heroes. Our economy is messed up. Our politics are messed up. And here comes Manny Pacquiao. He's a worldwide hero and someone to be proud of. It's become fanatical and sometimes it's gone overboard. They look at him as mythical, like a god who is to be worshipped."

Clearly, though, part of the fascination with Pacquiao is that he elicits a real sense of mortality and vulnerability, both in and out of the ring. Ever since he first came on the radar screens of boxing fans, everyone has been waiting for him to implode. Yes, he's gotten hit plenty. Yes, he sometimes stays out late and he's got tons of distractions, including a massive, growing entourage with needs, monetary and otherwise. But just when you think this ride of fame, celebrity, money, drama, and idol worship can't go any further, there emerges the purposeful, little whirling dervish of a young fighter, seemingly impervious to it all when it counts, displaying a raw, single mindedness to fight and destroy the best fighters in his weight class. He does what he says he's going to do. And he keeps it simple.

Pacquiao didn't just choose to fight in front of his own countrymen, he actually set the terms. The Larios fight was Pacquiao's first foray into promoting, and it proved to be a fabulous success. Manny Pacquiao Promotions, partnered with the Philippines' biggest broadcast entity, ABS-CBN, to make it happen. The television and radio giant shelled out $4-million to broadcast the fight, and subsequently embarked on a three-month promotional blitz through its outlets around the world that rivaled the World Cup in intensity. It also marked the first time a Philippine company put on a large-scale international pay-per-view event.

Normally, ABS-CBN fills its schedule with soap operas and gaudy variety shows. It reaches not only throughout the 7,017 islands of the Philippine archipelago, but also to Filipinos throughout the world via subscription television and the Internet. The Pacquiao fight gave the company the chance to present everything Filipinos love in one package.

"Whether it be sports or entertainment, Pacquiao's the biggest star in the Philippines right now," said Peter Musgni, vice president of ABS-CBN

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The day after his win over Larios, Pacquiao enjoyed a victory parade through the streets of Manila, much to the delight of his countless fans. Pacquiao's rags-to-riches story, which has been turned into a movie, has been inspiration to millions of his poverty-stricken countrymen.

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

More accolades: After the parade, Pacquiao visited Philippine President Gloria Arroyo at Malacanang Palace, where she bestowed upon him the honorary title "Champion For Life." His numerous commercial endorsements also keep him busy.

sports. "He represents the everyman. He's got a surefire winner of a story. The plot in a good Filipino drama always revolves around someone who's poor, who fights the hurdles, and comes out victorious in the end. It's the Cinderella story that most Filipinos would want to happen to them."

Of course, nothing succeeds like success. But this begs the question: How, exactly, does this 27-year-old grade-school dropout who came from grinding poverty keep this wild roller-coaster of a ride on the tracks and still perform at the highest levels of the sport?

For anyone looking for answers to just how long Pacquiao can keep up this frenetic pace, just ask the Filipino's closest American confident, trainer Freddie Roach. Because of numerous obligations in the Philippines, Pacquiao was two weeks late in training for the Larios fight. But once he reached Roach's Wild Card gym in Hollywood, it was strictly business.

"I've worked with 18 world champions," Roach said, "and he's the hardest-working fighter I've ever worked with by far. He's a fighter through and through. That's why I love Manny Pacquiao."

Nobody expected Larios to give Pacquiao any trouble. "Chololo" was moving up two weight classes to fight Pacquiao, and the fight figured to be merely a tune-up for a scheduled rubber match with Erik Morales, November 18 in Vegas.

But Larios had other ideas, sensing multimillion-dollar paydays if he could muster an upset. He trained two months for the fight, including the last month in Japan, in order to acclimate himself to the time change. The training program involved three punishing sessions a day: roadwork and brutal hill training in the morning, boxing practice in the afternoon, and weight training in the evening. Whatever free time he had left was spent watching tapes of Pacquiao's previous fights. Moreover, Larios, finally freed from the torture of starving himself to make the 122-pound weight limit, was able to enjoy a meal. The result was that by fight time, Larios' camp believed they had a real chance.

"He survived that training and now he's in the best shape of his life," said Larios' adviser, Rafael Mendoza, two days before the fight. "Pound-for-pound, nobody can beat Oscar Larios in conditioning. This is also the best I've seen him mentally in his whole career. I know he has the balls. He has the condition. The question is: Does Oscar have the chin to take Manny Pacquiao's punches? If he can, we're in business. I guarantee it."

Considering the brutal punishment Pac-Man had dished out to his recent high-profile opponents, that was quite

an audacious statement. And it very nearly proved accurate.

In order to accommodate fans in the United States, the fight took place at 11 a.m. Sunday morning. The Araneta Coliseum, the arena where Ali and Frazier engaged in their classic war 31 years earlier, was only half-full for the undercard. Ticket prices had been pegged at as much as $1,000, and there had been grumbling from the public for weeks. Then, as the main event approached, the 22,000-seat arena suddenly overflowed with people, many of them politicians and Filipino celebrities. Word had it that in order to ensure a sellout, Pacquiao and ABS-CBN had purchased upwards of 7,000 tickets to give away.

By the time the Philippine anthem had been sung, the atmosphere had become electric, with everyone expecting a Pacquiao bloodletting in the first round. Instead, after two tense but relatively even rounds, Larios stormed out of his corner for the third, backed Pacquiao up against the ropes, and slammed home a left hook that caught Pac-Man flush. He followed that up with a succession of lefts and rights that had the local hero stunned and momentarily in trouble.

Pacquiao, however, quickly gathered his senses and even dished out some blinding punishment of his own later in the round. It was clear, though, that the wily veteran from Guadalajara, Mexico, could punch at his new weight and that he wasn't afraid to try it out.

Showing a patience and maturity that barely existed even two years ago, Pacquiao then proceeded to dish out a methodical, painful lesson in fighting. Midway in the seventh round, he used his lightning quick speed to sneak inside a charging Larios and connected with a short right-left combination that sent the Mexican to the canvas. Larios immediately got up, but he never threatened after that. The remainder of the bout saw a relentless Pacquiao get stronger as the fight progressed. He scored another knockdown in the 12th round and claimed a lopsided unanimous decision by scores of 117-108 (Humberto Furgoni), 118-108 (Daniel Van de Weile), and 120-106 (Nopharat Sricharoen).

Although Pacquiao claimed he was never hurt and hinted that he actually carried Larios, referee Bruce McTavish said afterward that Pacquiao was indeed nearly out in the third round. So as in many of his previous fights, Pac-Man bared his huge heart for all to see, and not only came back and won, but did so with an exclamation point.

The fight, which was broadcast slightly delayed in the Philippines to accommodate the huge demand in commercial sponsors, garnered the highest rating in Philippine television history. Although the complete numbers weren't available at press time, Musgni said the company expected at least 100,000 PPV buys in the United States.

Immediately after the fight, Pacquiao basked in the rapturous cheers of his adoring countrymen, who were nearly unanimous in their praise for how Pac-Man had handled a tougher than expected Larios.

"I was impressed with his performance," Nathanielsz said. "Without a doubt, he's a more complete fighter now."

Talk soon turned to November and Morales. Pacquiao, never one to duck a challenge, said he wants to retire Morales, and that this time he's planning on training for two months in Los Angeles in order to get the job done quickly. Filipinos, of course, are fully expecting the joy ride to continue.

And if he stumbles somewhere down the line?

"If he loses, it'll be too much to bear," Nathanielsz said. "People think it'll never end. Unfortunately, we'll drown in our tears. We've got to develop new fighters to cushion the impact."

"So far we've gotten a lot of thrills out of him," Secuya said. "But how long can it go on? You can never tell with Manny Pacquiao."

And that, of course, is exactly what makes watching Pacquiao so exciting. ■

Ted Lerner is THE RING's Philippines correspondent.

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CHRIS EUBANK

"MAYBE I AM ECCENTRIC, BUT I'M A NICE ECCENTRIC"

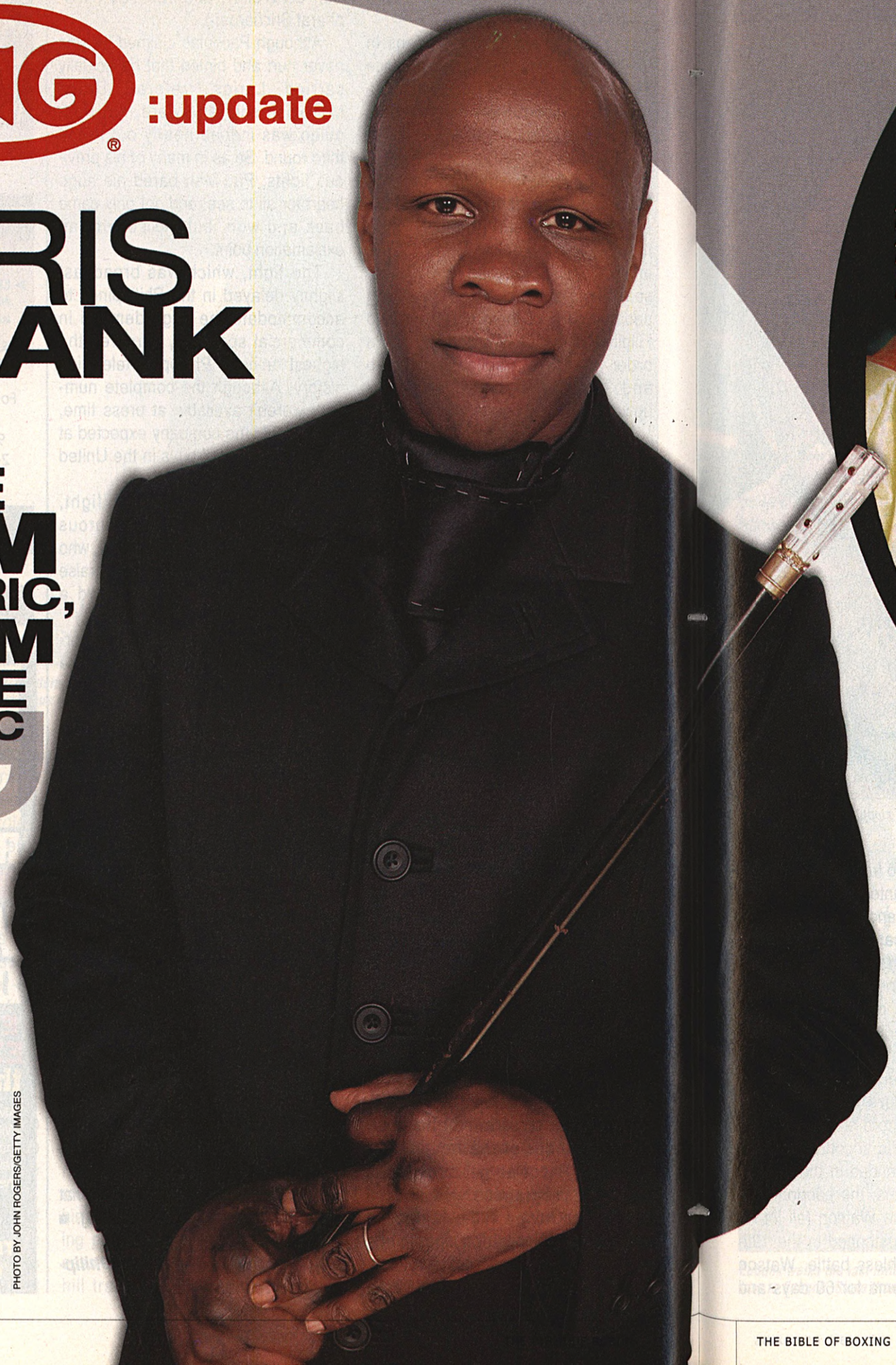

PHOTO BY JOHN ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES

Then and now: The always spiffily dressed Eubank backstage at the 2005 MOBO Awards in London, and as he looked disrobing for his 1993 bout with Nigel Benn that attracted 40,000 fans.

PHOTO BY MARC V. MORRIS

1993

By Brian Doogan

Bankrupt, a nomad in the throes of a painful divorce, Chris Eubank climbed from the cab of his gleaming blue Peterbilt truck, which he had parked on the doorstep of an exclusive London hotel, and strutted into the lobby, like a peacock in mating season. Dressed impeccably in a dark, three-piece suit, hand-stitched by his Savile Row tailor, and clutching a "manbag," he made for a table reserved in the corner via a choreographed circuit of the entire expanse of the hotel's ground floor. Only Tina Turner's *Simply The Best* was missing from his grand entrance.

"Someone who drives a truck, wears jodhpurs and a monocle, has poetry and philosophy on his mind, is quick-witted and struts—all of this alludes to a person who is a showoff," he said with a smile. "I'm a showman. There's a difference."

Within minutes, he was quoting from Samuel Johnson ("Remember, when he is old, that he has once been young"), Nietzsche ("We do not accuse nature of being immoral because it sends us a thunderstorm and makes us wet; why do we call the harmful man

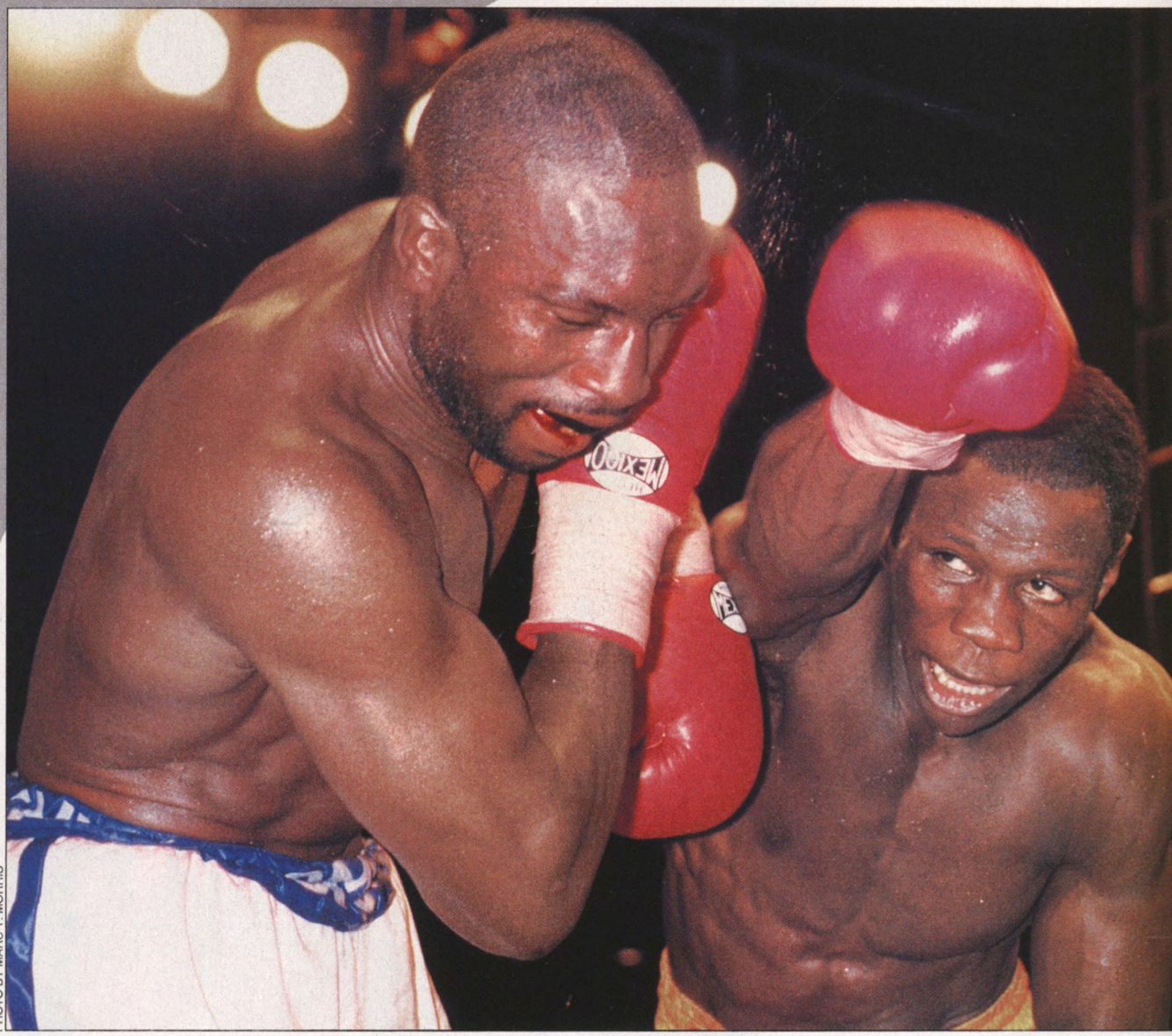

PHOTO BY MARC Y. MORRIS

Eubank drills arch-rival Benn during their thrilling 12-round draw in 1993. They had fought previously, in 1990, with Eubank stopping Benn in the ninth round after a fierce struggle.

immoral?") and Oscar Wilde ("How can a woman be expected to be happy with a man who insists on treating her as if she were a perfectly normal human being?"). He claimed that his IQ had recently been measured at 190 (the average IQ of philosophers and scientists is said to be 160). "I've found that I'm probably a crazy man to people who have an average IQ, which is 120," he announced. "I'm a little different, a little bit 'off.' Not that I'm off, it's just that you have to be intelligent to understand me. Three weeks ago I met somebody with an IQ of 246 (IQ is normally considered immeasurable if it exceeds 200). He is now going to be negotiating particular deals for me."

Celebrity Love Island was one offer to be considered, following on from his reality TV appearances on *Celebrity Big Brother* and *At Home With The Eubanks*. "But I can't get my head around it," he admitted. "They want me to go to fraternize with women. But will they love me for me? You know what type of man I am. I am a stoic, so I am going to question these individuals. If a woman can fall in love with a man in such an environment, she is an exceptional woman. I don't believe there is one who has existed yet. Will I go? I don't think I can. I am too much of a stoic. Love is not a funny thing."

The life of Christopher Livingstone Eubank, Lord of the Manor of Brighton (he bought the title for £45,000 in the mid-1990s because the title came with the paper ability to free a slave and "as a black man, I wanted to free a slave"), has become a strange odyssey, mirroring the boxing career that made his name. As a fighter, he was pugnacious. Twice he engaged Nigel Benn in heroic struggles, prevailing by ninth-round stoppage in Birmingham in 1990 before boxing to a near-standstill and a draw over 12 rounds in front of over 40,000 spectators at Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium in their 1993 rematch. His second bout with Michael Watson ended in the tragedy of White Hart Lane, the London football ground where Watson fell into a coma after being stopped in the 12th round of a breathless battle. Watson remained in a coma for 60 days and

his slow recovery over the years has been a miracle. Eubank was traumatized by the experience of beating a man half to death, albeit legally, but the relationship they have managed to build is strong, poignantly consummated when they linked hands as Watson crossed the line after walking the London marathon in 2003.

Despite the support of Watson and his family, Eubank was roundly condemned recently when he made the fight available to view on his Web site for a fee, 15 years after his fists had almost handed out a death sentence. "Pay to see me batter Watson," read one newspaper headline. A member of the British parliament declared, "Anyone who wants to watch this must be pretty strange." But Eubank was unapologetic.

"Dilemma? What dilemma would I have?" he demanded. "Did the fight happen? It did. So, because of what happened subsequently, the fight should be forgotten? No, there is no room in this business for hypocrisy. The boxing aficionado understands this. You can't say, 'I like to watch, but if it goes too far ...' If you're in this for a penny, you're in this for a pound. This aids Michael and it aids me. This is good. It's positive. I believe this fight is the ultimate example of what boxing is. I probably won one minute of the fight. For me, the fight was gone. Everything I hit Michael with, nothing. He just kept on coming.

"From the sixth round, I knew I couldn't win the fight. I looked across the ring at Michael and I said to myself, *I am walking out of this a proud man. You are not going to knock me out.* This man was too focused, too committed, and too enthused. I couldn't win the fight, but, as a matter of honor, the warrior is always there. I am going to stand up, at any cost. The only time I'll go down is when I am separated from my senses. Otherwise, the problem will not be living with the millions of people who may have seen me throw in the towel or stopping for my health's sake. It's not about living with them. I've got to live with me. That's the integrity of the warrior. When you're in a fight you can't win, you have to stay in and take your beating, no matter what, no matter the cost. This is the spirit of the fighter. The warrior is strong. He has complete resolve and, if he is to lose, he loses with honor, because there's respect with defeat if you do it honorably. This code can be traced through any philosophy of war. There is honor in defeat, if you lose on your shield. There is no honor in losing through throwing in the towel because you can't win. There's no honor in this at all."

Yet there were many dubious and dishonorable decisions that tainted Eubank's career. He lost only five of 52 fights, drew two, and won 45, but some of his victories were gifts, particularly

PHOTO BY PAUL GILHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Eubank walks the last mile of the Flora London marathon with Michael Watson (wearing number). Watson suffered brain damage in his 1991 knockout loss to Eubank. Since then, the two have formed a warm relationship.

PHOTO BY STEVE FINN/GETTY IMAGES

Eubank with his then-wife, Karron, and their children at the Disney Channel Awards in 2003. Since then, Karron, has left him because, according to Eubank, she can no longer tolerate his eccentric behavior.

during the course of his WBO title reigns at middleweight (three defenses) and super middleweight (14 successful defenses before Steve Collins brought the million-dollar purses to an end with back-to-back wins in Ireland). Joe Calzaghe, the current king of the super middleweights, outpointed Eubank in 1997, bringing down the curtain on his career at the highest level. But the showman remained, insistent that he had a "superhero complex," which he has taken all the way to Downing Street, protesting against the war in Iraq by driving his Peterbilt to the gates of Number 10, the Prime Minister's residence.

"I had a banner fixed to the top of the truck: 'Tony Blair, military occupation causes terrorism.' And this, remember, was in November 2003," Eubank emphasized. "On March 11, 2004, we had the Madrid bombings and, on July 7, 2005, the attack here in London. I'm not a clairvoyant. I just hold a common sense point of view. If I strike you, you are going to strike me back. This is the nature of the human. I tried to tell Blair that it was he who justified the war. Bush, whom no one can get to or reason with, just said, 'We're going to smoke 'em out, dead or alive.' It couldn't have been justified without Blair's articulateness and political savvy, and we, as intelligent people, should be ashamed of ourselves because we live in a democracy, which means government by the people. We marched against the war, and I brought my truck instead of my feet, but the situation now is senseless, a quagmire."

The crusades continue for Eubank. Before Christmas, he flew to South Africa, joining a team of more than 1,000 Irish volunteers who built 106 brick homes in just two weeks for the poorest families in the township of Imizamo Yethu, outside Cape Town. On his return to Dublin, he auctioned off his prized Harley-Davidson motorbike to raise £75,000 for a rugby player crippled in an accident. In Brighton, his hometown, where he recently expressed a desire to become the first black man to be cast as James Bond, he pulled over a bus to confront a stag party of about 15 20-year-olds on the top deck, one of whom had mooned at him through the rear window before exposing his crotch.

"I am arresting you," Eubank told him. "If you want to resist, I haven't got a problem. I will simply incapacitate you."

But a similar encounter with a delivery driver, whose lorry was blocking the road on the school run before Eubank took over the steering wheel and moved it, was the final straw for his wife, Karron, who has long viewed his eccentricities as embarrassing and attention-seeking, and can no longer live with either them or him.

"What am I supposed to do?" he protested. "Turn a blind eye? No. Other people do that and that's not me. This is why we have the situations we have in our society today. Kids do not respect their elders. When I was young and we got fresh with a stranger, we'd get a clip around the ear. Today a kid will stab you. As a society, we've gone too far. A child's rights should be controlled by their parents and by their elders. My kids (Christopher, 16, Sebastian, 14, Emily, 12, and Joseph, 9) could be professional children, for they have been brought up in the right way. I'm old school. They understand manners. They understand respect, which comes through fear, I believe, and I cannot change my grain. In spite of what Karron may think, I've never liked my boys walking on the grass around the property when it snows. I don't want to see footprints. It drives

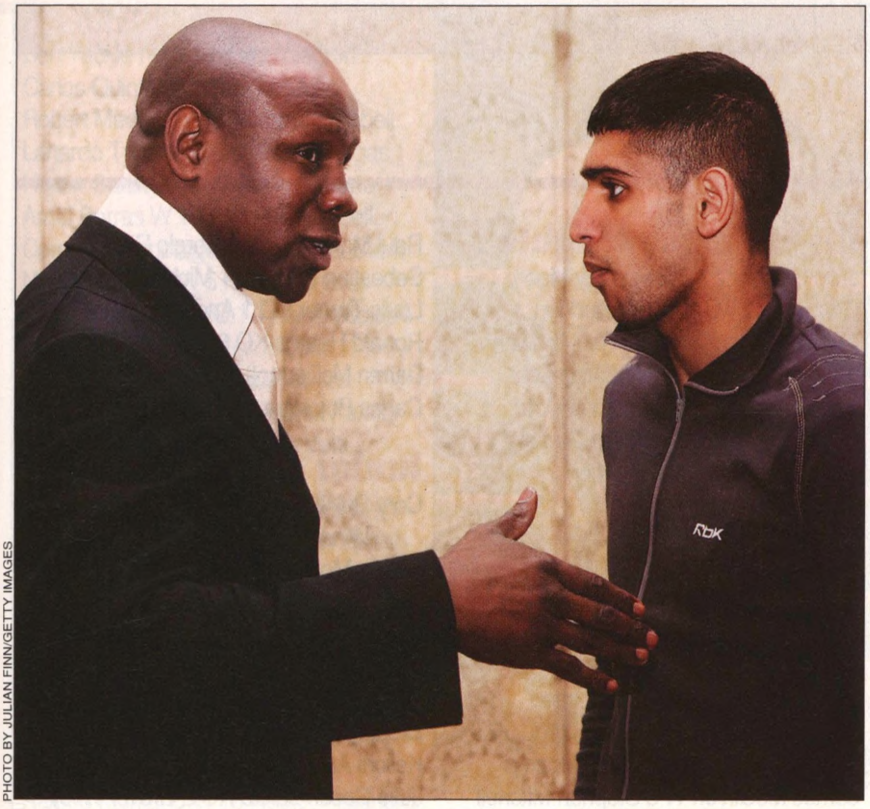

PHOTO BY JULIAN FINN/GETTY IMAGES

Still a big part of England's celebrity circuit, Eubank hobnobs with Britain's latest boxing star, Amir Khan. Although technically bankrupt, Eubank still manages to live well and is currently mulling over reality-TV show offers.

me nuts because it's not neat when the snow has been messed up. You don't change your grain, and I'm not going to. I am what I am, and I'm comfortable with this.

"I am not this way for eccentricity's sake. The lorry driver was breaking the law. Never mind that he was blocking the traffic; he was parked illegally in the middle of the road. You had parents distraught, trying to get their kids to school to have tests, and I said to the guy, 'Move your lorry to the left of the road. If you don't, I will.' Nonchalant as you like, he said, 'Go on then.' So I did. I got six points on my license, a clean license, and a £450 fine, but if I had done wrong, let me tell you, the judge would have taken my license away. But I'm still driving. Karron seemed to think of this as another example of me courting attention, and I do have to ask myself, 'What good is it having this high IQ if I can't look after my family or keep the woman I was in love with?' But I cannot change who I am."

The collapse of his marriage was followed swiftly by news last November that Eubank had declared himself bankrupt, unable to pay a £1.3-million tax bill, his years of extravagance finally caught up.

"Look at me. Am I really bankrupt?" he asked with a smile, just before his sons Christopher and Sebastian arrived at the hotel. "I'm certainly not bankrupt of effervescence. I'm not bankrupt of fun or life or my dignity, my character, my essence. Money's just a medium. I'm extremely wealthy in all other regards."

Eubank's autobiography concluded with the sentiment that the warrior is a creature of irony, for his genuine task is to ensure peace. He pondered this as he stepped into his truck. "You probably read about Max in the book," he said before driving back to Brighton. "I took him in off the street. I introduced him to my children. He lived in my home. Now I look back and think I brought a tramp into my house. Maybe I am eccentric. But I'm a nice eccentric. I only ever wanted acceptance." ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

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[Summary]

Heavyweights

Calvin Brock W 12 Timor Ibragimov
Matt Skelton W 12 Danny Williams
Tony Thompson W 12 Dominick Guinn
Chazz Witherspoon W 10 Michael Alexander
Jameel McCline W 10 Terry Smith
Ruslan Chagaev KO 8 Michael Sprott
Vladimir Virchis KO 6 Paolo Vidoz
David Cadieux KO 4 Rogerio Lobo
Tye Fields KO 4 Maurice Harris
Paul Marinaccio KO 3 Benito Fernandez
Malcolm Tann KO 3 Derek Berry
Oliver McCall KO 1 Kenny Craven
Bob Mirovic KO 2 Richard Tutaki
Joe Mesi W 6 Stephane Tessier
Andre Purlette W 6 Darnell Wilson

Cruiserweights

Jean-Marc Mormeck KO 4 Sebastian Hill
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk KO 1 Mircea Telecan
David Haye W 12 Ismail Abdoul
Fabrice Tiozzo KO 5 Henry Saenz
Shane Swartz Tech. Win 5 Dale Brown
Enzo Maccarinelli KO 9 Marcelo Dominguez

Light Heavyweights

Julio Gonzalez KO 3 Rodney Moore
Chris Henry KO 1 Brock Stodden
Jaidon Codrington KO 3 Roy Ashworth
Julio Dominguez KO 3 Cristian Leal
William Joppy KO 5 Jonathan Corn
Jackson Chanet W 8 David Greter
Thomas Reid W 8 Manu Ntoh

Super Middleweights

Jean Pascal W 10 Darnell Boone
Marcos Primera KO 8 Curtis Stevens
Tyrone Brunson KO 1 Chris Grays
Andre Dirrell KO 3 Marcus Hall
Stephan Boyd KO 3 Adam Green
Nader Hamdan KO 2 Paula Tuilau
Anthony Dirrell KO 1 James Morrow
James McGirt Jr. W 8 Stephan Mitchell

Middleweights

Javier Castillejo KO 10 Felix Sturm *(Wins WBA title)*
Randy Griffin W 12 Maselino Masoe
Gary Lockett W 12 Ryan Rhodes
Daniel Santos KO 1 Will Evans
Yory Boy Campas KO 6 Miguel Hernandez
Raul Marquez KO 5 Sergio Rios
Sebastian Zbik KO 1 Michel Mothmora
Louis Turner KO 1 Andy Utterback
Ronald Hearns KO 6 Hector Hernandez
Darren McDermott KO 3 Andrzej Butowicz
Carlos Bojorquez KO 2 Marlon Thomas

Junior Middleweights

Cory Spinks W 12 Roman Karmazin *(Wins IBF Title)*
Shane Mosley KO 6 Fernando Vargas
Joachim Alcine W 12 Javier Mamani
Jaime Barboza W 12 Humberto Aranda
Crazy Kim KO 9 Baira Kim
Jerome Ellis KO 6 Neil Sinclair
Bradley Pryce KO 3 Hassan Matumla
Keiichi Arai KO 3 Sornsak Sor Worapin
Julio Cesar Garcia KO 2 Grover Wiley
Marcos Maidana KO 1 Ariel Aparicio
Yukence Andino KO 1 Chris Govan
Kazuhiko Hidaka KO 2 Shinsuke Matsumoto

Welterweights

Carlos Baldomir KO 9 Arturo Gatti *(Retains World Title)*

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Lightweight Diaz rips a left into Suico

Ben Tackie KO 9 Wilfredo Negron
Carlos Quintana W 12 Joel Julio
Robert Medley W 10 Adrian Campbell
Lanardo Tyner W 10 Gilbert Venegas
Hector Saldivia W 10 Raul Bejarano
Arnel Porras W 10 Adrian Campbell
Cornelius Bundrage W 5 Michael Clark
Norberto Bravo W 5 Rudy Cisneros
Devon Alexander KO 1 Tyler Ziolkowski
Tony Doherty KO 1 Ihar Filonau
Dmitriy Salita KO 6 Shad Howard
Antonio Mesquita KO 6 Santos Pakau
Steve Marquez KO 3 Sergio Vela

Junior Welterweights

Juan Urango W 12 Naoufel Ben Rabah
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Lovemore Ndou KO 5
Manopchai Singmanasak
Souleymane M'Baye KO 4
Laszlo Komjathi
Rogelio Castaneda Jr. W 10
Lamar Murphy
Ramon Montano W 10 Hector Alejandro
Sirimongkol Singwangcha KO 3
Lito Gonzaga
Amir Khan KO 2 Colin Bain
Danny Romero KO 4 Edgar Pedraza
Eleazar Contreras Jr. W 8 Dorin Spivey
Diego Jesus Ponce W 8
Javier Mendoza Suarez

Lightweights

Juan Diaz KO 9 Randy Suico
(Retains WBA Title)
Carlos Hernandez W 10 Sean Plessis
Joel Casamayor KO 9 Lamont Pearson
Tetsuya Shinozaki KO 5
Chamuang Kiatniwat
John Jackson KO 2 Jeff Farmer

Junior Lightweights

Manny Pacquiao W 12 Oscar Larios
Matias Ferreyra W 12
Julio Cesar Alganaraz
Mzonke Fana W 10 Jack Asis
Francisco Lorenzo W 10 Priest Smalls
Daniel Jimenez KO 5 Adalberto Borquez
Eduardo Escobedo KO 3
Abel Berrelleza
Kevin Mitchell KO 2 Imad Ben Khalifa
Jimrex Jaca Tech. Win 7 Hector Marquez
Vicente Escobedo W 8 Baudel Cardenas

Featherweights

Jeffrey Mathebula W 12 Aaron Melgarejo

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Junior featherweight Ponce De Leon sends Looknongyangtoy crashing down

Makyo Sugita W 10 Ji Hoon Kim
Robert Guerrero KO 6 Gamaliel Diaz
Jason Litzau KO 1 Nicky Bentz
Stephen Foster KO 2 Frederic Bonifai

Junior Featherweight

Daniel Ponce De Leon KO 1
Sod Looknongyangtoy
Daisuke Yamanka KO 9
Rikiya Fukuhara
Ratanachai Sor Vorapin KO 3
Atsushi Kitamura
Kiko Martinez W 12 John Bikai
Fahsan 3K Battery KO 4
Edmund Nonong
Antonio Escalante KO 9 Alex Baba
Felix Montiel KO 7 Michael Alejandro
Billy Dib KO 4 Ruben Santillanosa
Ricky Tsukamoto KO 5
Tetsuhiro Isomatsu
Kunihiro Kinoshita W 8
Yoshimasa Shibata

Bantamweights

Wladimir Sidorenko W 12
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym
(Retains WBA Title)
Thepnimit Sor Chitpattana W 12
Jun Eraham
Tshifhiwa Munyai W 12 Martin Power
Gerry Penalosa W 10 Tomas Rojas
Ryuichi Okahashi KO 3
Phalangchai Chuwatana

Junior Bantamweights

Nobuo Nashiro KO 10 Martin Castillo
(Wins WBA Title)
Duangpetch Saengmorakot W 12
Eric Barcelona
Raul Martinez KO 1 Alex Becerra
Takefumi Sakata KO 5 Ki Suk Bae

Flyweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 4
Everardo Morales
(Retains WBC Title)
Brahim Asloum W 12 Jose Jimenez
Alejandro Hernandez W 12
Gilberto Keb Baas
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym W 12
Orlando Enriquez
Jonathan Perez W 12 Eduardo Pacheco
Daisuke Naito KO 6 Noriyuki Komatsu

Junior Flyweights

Wandee Singwangcha W 12
Juanito Rubillar
Hugo Cazares KO 1 Domingo Guillen

Strawweights

Toshikazu Waga KO 9
Wisan Sor Suchanya

Cory Spinks W 12 Roman Karmazin

St. Louis, Missouri: Seventeen months after losing the world welterweight title to Zab Judah via ninth-round knockout, Spinks returned to the scene of his defeat (the Savvis Center) and won the IBF junior middleweight title with a majority 12-round decision over Karmazin. And although his performance was far from sensational, Spinks can now count himself a player in a division that boasts such marquee names as Oscar De La Hoya and Shane Mosley.

On paper, it seemed a fine comeback for the son of former heavyweight champion Leon Spinks, but few who actually saw the bout would clamor for a match between the man who calls himself "The New Generation" and any of the aforementioned worthies. Not only did Spinks, 28, win by a narrow margin, he spent virtually the entire second half of the bout in survival mode. Moreover, he topped a less-than-dominant outing by indulging in perhaps the most prolonged postfight crying jags in boxing history. The sobfest continued so long, even Spinks' corner appeared embarrassed as they urged him to pull himself together and "go get your belt."

Southpaw Spinks, 153, used his speed, agility, and defensive skills to win four of the first five rounds on all three official scorecards. Except for a right hand that made Spinks stumble backward in the second, titleholder Karmazin, making the first defense of the strap he won from Kassim Ouma in July 2005, couldn't solve his adversary's circle-and-peck style. By the third round, Spinks was mixing in stinging combinations as Karmazin lurched after him like a robot with a short in his offensive circuit board.

Karmazin managed to pin Spinks on the ropes in the sixth and rough him up a bit, which led to an even better round for the Russian in the seventh, when he rammed home a hard right to the head.

The eighth and ninth were close; Spinks scored occasionally with his southpaw jab, while Karmazin, whose face was showing the effects of the punches he'd absorbed, attempted to work the body. There was, however, a subtle shift in momentum: As Karmazin began to reach him with more frequency, Spinks grew increasingly negative.

The 10th was Karmazin's best round. He nailed Spinks with a flush right and followed up with several more scoring blows to the head and body. Spinks was still popping in occasional counters, but seemed more interested in staying out of trouble than staging a big finish.

Spinks, 35-3 (11), countered well enough to take the 11th on all three of the judges' cards, but when he turned ultra-defensive in the 12th, two judges gave the final round to Karmazin.

Judge Jerry Griffin (Missouri) scored the fight even at 114-114 (the same as THE RING), but was overruled by Melvina Lathan (New York) and Manfred Kuchler (Germany), who both scored it 115-113 in Spinks' favor.

PHOTO BY ELSA/GETTY/IMAGES

Spinks edges Karmazin to annex IBF 154-pound title

It was one of those ungainly, scrambling affairs with little to distinguish it, and neither Karmazin, 34-2-1 (21), nor the aesthetic quality of the bout was helped by American referee Mark Nelson's refusal to allow the defending titleholder to fight on the inside. But the crowd of 12,018 seemed pleased to see its homeboy with a new belt around his waist. Spinks' view of things, however, seemed distorted by his veil of tears.

"I painted a masterpiece with my talents," said Spinks, who obviously hasn't paid too many visits to One Fine Arts Drive, the location of the St. Louis Art Museum.

"Spinks was very tricky," admitted the 33-year-old Karmazin. "It took until the seventh round to figure him out, and then he ran the rest of the way. It was hard to win with a referee like the one we had tonight. He didn't let me work at close range."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Don King Productions**
(7-8-06)

Israel Vazquez KO 4 Ivan Hernandez

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Vazquez considers himself stylish, both in and out of the ring. That's why he sometimes likes to highlight his hair with blond tips before fights. And Vazquez did just fine in the ring against "Choko" Hernandez. But his coiffure didn't fare quite so well. The world junior featherweight champion started out with blond highlights, but after four bloody rounds with Hernandez, he finished as a redhead.

Vazquez, 122, West Covina, California, was defending the 122-pound RING title for the first time since his victory over Oscar Larios to claim the vacant belt. The undersized Hernandez, 122, Ensenada, Mexico, was making the jump up from junior bantamweight to challenge him.

"El Magnifico" started fast, popping Hernandez with a steady jab. Vazquez concluded the first round with a right to the nose of Hernandez. The second round was a little more balanced. Hernandez began using movement, while Vazquez kept coming forward. With less than a minute left in the round, the two fighters were trading at close range when Vazquez ripped a vicious right uppercut into the bowing Hernandez. That's when the red faucet erupted, as Choko sustained a cut near his scalp line.

By the third, Vazquez, 28, was scoring easily with rights, and Hernandez' nose began bleeding. Battling both blood and the constant barrage of Vazquez' punches, Hernandez, 23, kept coming forward, only to get tagged by another Vazquez salvo. In the fourth, the blood was everywhere. Each punch Vazquez landed turned into a blood shower that sprayed referee Earl Morton (USA) and those seated at ringside.

Vazquez closed the fourth with a straight right that seemed to ignite every cut on Hernandez, including new cuts on the bridge of his nose, with a steady flow coming from his nostrils and down the side of his face.

The one-sided beating and loss of blood prompted Morton to call on ringside physician Dr. Howard Taylor to take a close look at Hernandez, 23-2-1 (13), after the fourth. After conferring with Taylor, Morton opted not to let the challenger out for the fifth round, awarding Vazquez a fourth-round TKO victory.

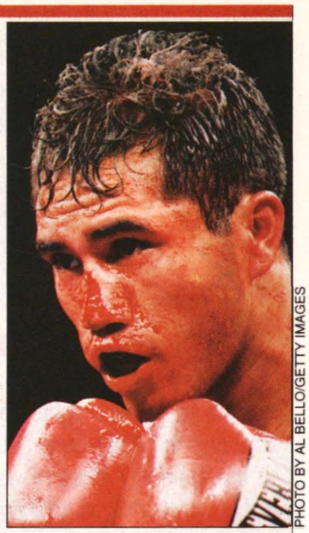

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Hernandez' face was a gory mess after four rounds with Vazquez

"There's blood all over me, it's his blood," Vazquez, 40-3 (29), said back in his dressing room. "He started bleeding after I hit him with that uppercut late in the second round. It wasn't a headbutt. I thought this was a fight where we would stand there and exchange. But he moved a lot more than I expected.

"When I started to press him, that's when he slowed down. If this wasn't stopped after the fourth, I would have eventually

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Presented by EVERLAST

Manny Pacquiao

A note to all Mexican fighters in the vicinity of 130 pounds: Just stay the hell away from Manny Pacquiao. This guy eats up Mexican opponents the way his nickname-sake eats up tiny yellow pixilated dots.

With Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, and Juan Manuel Marquez all having already tasted "Pac-Man's" destructive power and having found themselves on the canvas multiple times, Oscar Larios joined the victim list in July, hitting the deck twice en route to losing a fairly lopsided unanimous decision. Yes, Larios was coming off a loss. Yes, he was a 122-pounder in his previous fight. And, yes, he gave Pacquiao a frightening moment in the thrilling third round. But he was still a highly respected foe who was on some pound-for-pound lists less than a year ago, and, that third-round scare aside, Pacquiao pretty well had his way with him.

Word is that another fight with Morales is next for Pacquiao. That's fine by him. As long as they keep lining up the Mexicans, Pacquiao will gladly keep chewing them up and spitting them out.

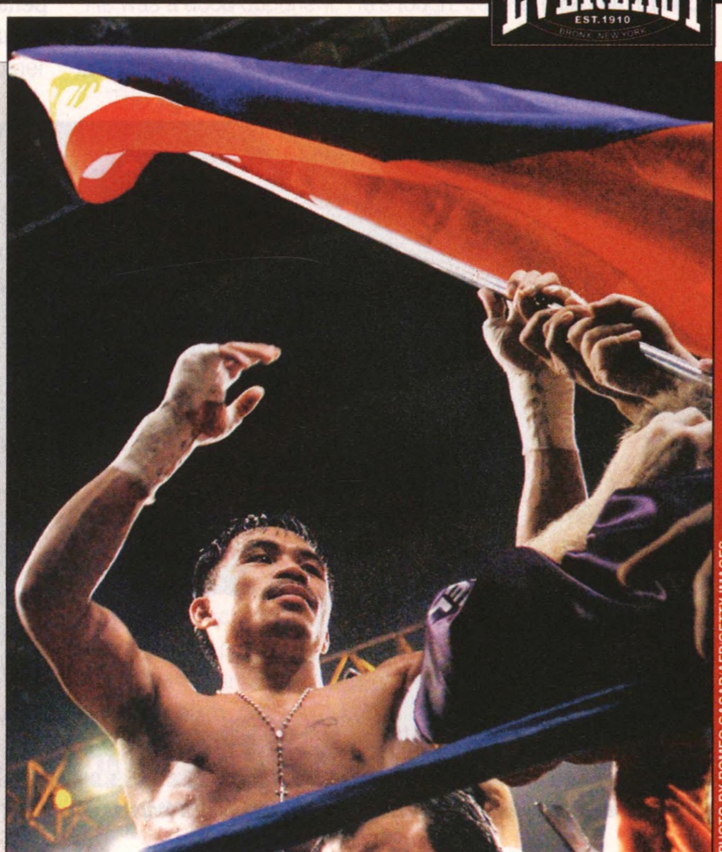

PHOTO BY ROMEO GACAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

stopped him in the sixth or seventh round. The plan was to put pressure on him. Once I started sitting on my punches more, I knew it was only a matter of time before he'd start slowing down."

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(6-10-06)
Joe Santoliquito

Joel Casamayor KO 9 Lamont Pearson

Phoenix, Arizona: Cuban veteran Casamayor has always been a fighter who fights up or down to the level of his opposition, and this keep-busy bout against the second-rate Pearson at the Celebrity Theatre was no exception. Casamayor took about six rounds to get going, and finally won by stoppage in the ninth when Pearson could no longer cope with a bloody and swollen right eye. It wasn't the emphatic performance Casamayor needed to force a fight with one of the lightweight division's bigger names (this was his second marking-time kayo win since a draw on HBO in June '05 against Almazbek "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov), but at least "El Cepillo" brought enough artillery to avoid an upset defeat.

Early on, that upset looked quite possible. Pearson, fighting for the first time in '06, jabbed on at least even terms with Casamayor in the first few rounds, and he landed an eye-catching lead right hand late in the first. Pearson, 134½, Capitol Heights, Maryland, also landed a pair of excellent right hands in the second, while Casamayor, 136, Mirmar, Florida, via Cuba, struggled to get untracked. The deficit deepened when Pearson, 35, stole a close third round with a right hand shortly before the bell.

But former junior lightweight titleholder and longtime near-pound-for-pounder Casamayor, also 35, finally got going in the fourth, finding the mark with a series of hard bodyshots. The fifth and sixth were both tepid rounds, with Casamayor probably edging them with his superior boxing.

Having fought poorly for the first three rounds, and then adequately for the next three, Casamayor, 33-3-1 (21), finally began looking like the top contender he is in what would turn out to be the final three rounds. A counter left cross from the southpaw knocked Pearson off-balance in the seventh, and another left caused swelling over the underdog's right eye. Yet another left caused Pearson to stumble backward and cover up, and Casamayor opened up with both hands.

The eighth featured more of the same, with a cut opening over Pearson's right eye from all the leather the Cuban was landing. By the ninth, Pearson, 23-4-1 (12), had gone into a defensive shell, and Casamayor gladly unloaded shots without fear of retaliation. About 30 seconds into the round, Pearson fell to the canvas—referee Bobby Ferrara (USA) correctly called it a slip—and when the Maryland fighter got up, he complained that he couldn't see out of the eye. After a brief chat with the ringside doctor, Ferrara stopped the bout at 44 seconds of the round.

With world lightweight champion Diego Corrales observing the bout from the comfort of ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* studio, there were plenty of fireworks during the postfight interview. Corrales and Casamayor split two fights in 2003 and 2004, and Corrales said before the fight that he needed to be suitably impressed with Casamayor to be interested in a rubber match. He let Casamayor know just how unimpressed he was, and with some help from translator/mouthpiece Luis de Cubas, Casamayor responded in kind. Maybe the Cuban's performance on this night wasn't great, but a third fight with Corrales would be easy to promote just the same.

Promoter: **DRL Promotions**
(7-7-06)

PHOTO BY SAEED KHAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The referee pulls Wonjongkam away from bloody and beaten Morales

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam KO 4 Everardo Morales

Bangkok, Thailand: A single left hand to the right eye of challenger Morales from Pongsaklek was all it took for the champion to secure his 15th straight successful WBC flyweight title defense. Pongsaklek, 112, Nakorn Ratchisima, Thailand, had little trouble figuring out Morales, 111¾, Mexico City, Mexico, and, as expected, made quick work of the journeyman, looking sharp in scoring a fourth-round TKO.

With the victory, Pongsaklek, 28, surpassed the record of 14 successful flyweight title defenses previously held by Miguel Canto. The Thai has now won 47 in a row and hasn't lost in 10 years. Statistically at least, the pug-nosed beltholder seems assured of greatness. In the past year, however, Pongsaklek

has come under fire for failing to take on name fighters and prolonging his reign against relatively mediocre opposition.

With the 5,000 Thais in attendance frenetically cheering him on, Pongsaklek bolted out of the starting gate in round one, aggressively moving forward and scoring repeatedly with his right hook and straight left to the body. Morales, 29, tried using the jab to work his way inside, but the tight defense Pongsaklek has displayed throughout his career prevented the Mexican fighter from making headway.

The quick pace continued in round two. Pongsaklek was clearly the more active of the two fighters, peppering Morales with three, four, and five-punch combinations and thwarting any attacks mounted by Morales. To his credit, Morales, although unable to land any punches of substance, didn't stop trying. Just under a minute into the round, Morales let go a combination, only to be countered and knocked down by a sharp left from the titleholder. Morales jumped up immediately, shaking his hands to demonstrate it was a push and not a knockdown, but referee Bill Clancy (USA) counted to eight and the fight continued.

PHOTO BY RICK GUZMAN

Darchinyan drills Maldonado with a left

Both fighters exchanged freely in round three, but it was Pongsaklek who landed the harder blows. At the close of the round, Pongsaklek, moving to his right, connected with a strong left to the temple of Morales, stunning him momentarily and knocking him back a step. Seizing the opportunity, Pongsaklek launched a left-right combination that missed, but then landed a crunching left, dropping Morales to all fours. Morales once again rose immediately; this time, however, he was bloodied from a cut over his right eye. The bell sounded to end the stanza and the doctor was quickly called to the corner to examine the cut.

After a lengthy conversation, the go-ahead was given and round four began. Pongsaklek, sensing the end was near, pounced on Morales, ripping into him with non-stop combinations. Morales managed to push Pongsaklek to the ropes, but with blood streaming down his face and the two fighters still exchanging punches, the referee stepped in and called a temporary halt to the action. The doctor was again called up to check the cut of Morales. This time, the cut was deemed too serious for Morales to continue, and Pongsaklek was declared the victor at 0:55 of the round.

Pongsaklek is now slated to face Monelisi Myekeni of South Africa later this year.

Promoter: **Petchyindee Boxing Promotion**

(6-30-06)

Scott Mallon

Vic Darchinyan KO 8 Luis Maldonado

Las Vegas, Nevada: Darchinyan and Maldonado thought they were the supporting act to the Jose Luis Castillo-Diego Corrales rubber match, but because of the farce at the lightweight championship weigh-in—where Castillo came in five pounds overweight—the flyweight fight was bumped to main event status. It's debatable whether those circumstances made this fight higher profile (as a main attraction) or lower profile (now that less people would be watching the show). What isn't debatable is that Darchinyan delivered just as you'd expect a headliner to.

The arena at the Thomas & Mack Center was more than half empty because many fans had received refunds when the original main event fell through. But it was clear that the majority of the remaining supporters belonged to Darchinyan, who was making his fourth defense of the IBF flyweight belt.

Darchinyan said of the previously undefeated Maldonado, "He was a good opponent. He's tough. Jeff Fenech, my trainer, told me 'Don't rush, be patient.' I wanted to knock him out. I knew he would give me a good fight and I was ready."

The fight began with the taller Maldonado, 112, moving around the ring throwing his left jab. Southpaw Darchinyan, 112, stalked his opponent, looking to land his straight left hand, but as he did this, Maldonado, Mexicali, Mexico, would switch to the southpaw stance to try to make him miss, something he continued to do throughout the fight.

Darchinyan, Sydney, Australia, had a style where he stayed low, then came jumping in with overhand lefts, sometimes leaving his chin exposed for Maldonado, 33-1 (25), to land a straight left. Maldonado had some success with this punch in the second and third rounds, but that was about the extent of what he accomplished.

Over the next few rounds, 2000 Olympian Darchinyan, 26-0 (21), showed his experience and started landing punches at will. A cut opened up over Maldonado's right eye in the fourth round and blood was running down the side of his face. Maldonado couldn't quite figure out where most of Darchinyan's punches were coming from, as the titleholder threw them in an unorthodox manner from every direction.

In the sixth, a big overhand left dropped the 28-year-old Maldonado to his knees—his first time on the canvas as a pro—forcing referee Joe Cortez (USA) to give him a count. He made it through the round, but it was clear that

Darchinyan, 30, was the boss and the end was near.

Maldonado's legs were wobbly. In round eight, Darchinyan landed left after left to Maldonado's head, and it looked as though the challenger had had enough. Cortez finally stepped in and stopped the fight at 1:38 of the round, giving Darchinyan, one of the pound-for-pound hardest hitters in boxing, a TKO win.

"I want a unification of belts," the Aussie said afterward. "Or I can move up to 115 or 118 to fight anyone. I want Jorge Arce next, but we have not heard from him."

Television: **Showtime**
Promoters: **Top Rank, Gary Shaw Productions**
(6-3-06)
Wayne McCullough

Cassius Baloyi KO 11 Manuel Medina

Airway Heights, Washington: Four-time featherweight titleholder Medina has proven to be one of those fighters you can never count out. Even referee Earl Brown seemed to understand that ... so he went ahead and waved the contest off without a count when the Mexican veteran went down for the third time in the 11th round against the younger, stronger Baloyi.

Medina's body had carried him as far as it could in this bout at the Northern Quest Casino, but by the late rounds, he could take no more. Is this the end for the oft-resurrected Medina? You can never say for sure. But it sure looked like, at 35 and after two decades as a pro, Medina has claimed his last alphabet title.

He and Baloyi were fighting for the vacant IBF junior lightweight title on this occasion—imagine that, a vacant IBF belt! How the strap became vacant is irrelevant, as is the fact that Baloyi now holds it. What matters is that this was a solid, competitive matchup of 130-pound fringe contenders, and Baloyi is now in the mix while Medina is not.

Medina, 130, Tijuana, Mexico, fought well for the first half of the fight, but there was always a sense that Baloyi, 130, Johannesburg, South Africa, had the physical tools to take command. Still, most of the early rounds seemed to belong to the aging "Mantecas," who was bouncing around on his spindly legs, getting in and out and throwing punches in combination at an almost nonstop rate. Baloyi, 31, was perpetually plowing ahead, always looking for ways to land a fight-turning punch, but through the first six stanzas, he couldn't do it.

That changed in the seventh. The South African landed a three-punch combination to the head with about a minute left in the round, jarring Medina momentarily. Midway through the eighth, a left hook-right cross combination got to Medina. Though the Mexican did better in the ninth and opened a small cut in the corner of Baloyi's left eye, it was apparent that it was going to be a struggle for him to keep his energy level up for three more rounds.

Halfway through the 10th, Baloyi landed three consecutive right hands, driving Medina to the ropes. Mantecas spent the rest of the round on his bicycle. Early in round 11, a right to the jaw made Medina's head snap to the side. Baloyi landed two more right hands, buckling his foe's knees, and another right hand a moment later made Medina clinch. The old man stayed erect as long as he could, but finally, with 1:40 to go in the round, he fell to his knees from a prolonged assault. Medina grabbed the ropes and struggled to pull himself up at the count of eight.

When the fighters came together again, Baloyi immediately scored with a sharp three-punch combo, and Medina went down again. This time, he got up at seven. It wasn't long before Baloyi, 32-2 (17), found a home for another combination, and this one was punctuated by a left hook to the chin that put Medina, 66-15 (31), down a third time. Ref Brown immediately called a halt at 2:19 of the round.

Baloyi was scheduled as of press time to make his first defense of his trinket against sturdy but unspectacular Gary St. Clair in South Africa.

Promoter: **Banner Promotions**
Television: **ESPN2**
(5-31-06)

Nicolay Valuev KO 3 Owen Beck

Hanover, Germany: Don King, who hinted at plans to take Valuev to New York and picture him atop the Empire State Building, was at his bombastic best. "He will be undisputed champion of the whole world and people of all races, all colors, creeds, and religions can give praise to Nicolay because he doesn't discriminate. He knocks them all out," King proclaimed. "He's a Russian and he's coming with love." A warning that the airplanes ought to be kept on standby was King's subtext.

PHOTO BY RONNY HARTMAN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Massive Valuev bulldozes Beck into third-round kayo defeat

Valuev, 320¾, St. Petersburg, Russia, may loathe the nicknames that roll readily from observers' lips—"The Beast From The East," "King Kong," "Shrek"—but he'd better get used to the sales pitch. An opponent he outweighed by nearly 80 pounds, who went by the sobriquet of the "What The Heck," was never meant to be serious competition for the 7'2" man-mountain, merely cannon fodder. Beck, 242½, Nashville, Tennessee, via Negril, Jamaica, survived an ominous opening round, got floored in the second, and fell again in the third before Puerto Rican referee Luis Pabon stepped in to end the slaughter. More of the same can be expected when Valuev makes his American debut, which King is anxious to stage before the end of the year.

This, of course, was a spectacle rather than a fight, a classic soft first defense for the WBA heavyweight titleholder. From the moment the opening bell rang, it was clear that Beck, who stood about a foot shorter than the Russian giant, was so ill-equipped to look after himself that the temptation was to send in the planes prematurely. With his massive 85-inch reach, Valuev, 44-0 (32), was able to keep Beck at arm's length and repel the Jamaican's attempts to get inside as if he was swatting away a badly behaved kid. The first big right that crashed into Beck's head caused his knees to buckle, and when he managed to remain on his feet, this represented a small victory, so overwhelming were Valuev's advantages.

Beck, 25-3 (18), was perfectly made for the job, for he had lost two of his previous three fights, getting stopped in the ninth round by Monte Barrett in February 2005 and dropping a 12-round split decision to journeyman Ray Austin before claiming an eight-round unanimous decision over Darnell Wilson in January at Madison Square Garden. At the Tui Arena, he climbed off his stool for the second round with a look of abject resignation etched into his face. His expression was even more troubled by the end of the round, for he was felled by a right hand and saved by the bell. In the third, Valuev, 32, came out to finish the job and decked Beck again with another big right hand. The 30-year-old Jamaican rose to his feet valiantly, but another series of thudding blows persuaded referee Pabon to intervene at the 1:44 mark.

"America is yearning for him to come," King concluded. "The bird of Russia is flying, the bird of Russia is singing." And King is hoping to be running … straight to the bank.

Promoters: **Wilfried Sauerland** in association with **Don King Productions**

(6-3-06)

Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY JAVIER CENTENO

Urango (right) wins controversial decision over Ben Rabah

Juan Urango W 12 Naoufel Ben Rabah

Hollywood, Florida: After losing one of the most controversial decisions of the year so far, Ben Rabah, who traveled all the way from Australia for this bout at the Seminole Hard Rock Live Arena, was understandably devastated. But he should look on the bright side: At least now he doesn't have to worry about getting stripped by the IBF. That will instead be winner Urango's problem.

How unproven prospect Urango and total unknown Ben Rabah came to be fighting for the vacant junior welterweight belt that had been senselessly stripped from Ricky Hatton is a mystery only Marian Muhammad can explain. Suitably, the scoring of the bout was almost as mysterious. Ben Rabah, 138, Perth, Australia, via Tunisia, outboxed Urango, 139, Miami, Florida, via Colombia, to the point of almost total frustration. Urango was the picture of ineffective aggression for much of the fight, but all three Florida judges scored in his favor at the end of 12 rounds—prompting even the pro-Urango crowd to jeer the result.

Ben Rabah made the mistake of moving backward throughout the bout, which apparently made more of an impression on the judges than the fact that he was consistently outlanding Urango. Urango, 25, marching forward but not jabbing his way in, allowing the awkward and shifty Ben Rabah, 28, to pick him apart with quick shots. In the second round, the Tunisian scored with a clean right to the jaw, and in the third, another right hand snapped Urango's head back. Ben Rabah had Urango scouted well, and seemed to sense when his predictable punches were about to launch, which made it easy to elude and counter. Ben Rabah did some good work with the uppercut in the fourth, though Urango came back and had a decent fifth round, scoring with an uppercut of his own as well as some bodyshots.

The seventh and eighth were two of Ben Rabah's best rounds, as he allowed himself to be backed into the corners, only to fight his way out without taking any flush punches.

Urango kept steaming forward, but he was throwing just one punch at a time, and those that landed didn't seem to be enough, in most rounds, to make up for all the ones he missed and all the shots the lighter punching Ben Rabah was landing.

It wasn't until the 11th and 12th rounds that Urango really took control of the fight. Ben Rabah, 24-2 (13), was in full retreat (believing he had the fight won as long as he stayed on his feet), and Urango, 17-0-1 (13), blasted away to the body effectively. It wasn't a strong finish for Ben Rabah, but on THE RING's scorecard, all the last two rounds did was change it from a wide decision to a somewhat close decision. We still had Ben Rabah winning, 116-113. However, judge Peter Trematerra had the local fighter ahead 115-113, Michael Pernick had it 116-112, and John Wright had it a particularly outrageous 117-111.

The referee was Tommy Kimmons (USA).

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Warriors Boxing**
(6-30-06)

Calvin Brock W 12 Timor Ibragimov

Las Vegas, Nevada: The boxing world is waiting to find a heavyweight with championship-caliber skills and an entertaining enough style to give the fans and media a reason to come see him fight. Brock didn't show much of either, especially falling short in the entertainment department, as he won a 12-round unanimous decision over Ibragimov at the end of a dull fight in which neither fighter threw very many punches.

"[Ibragimov] was real good. I give him credit," Brock said, trying to save face. "It's experience for 12 strong rounds ... Styles make boxing matches. I beat him, but I wasn't so sure that I could knock him out because he was a safety-first boxer and it's not always easy to knock out a safety-first boxer."

"I was prepared for this 100 percent," Ibragimov stated. "It was my mistake. I needed to throw more punches."

The temperature at the outdoor arena at Caesars Palace was well into the 100s, so no one would have criticized any of the fighters on the card for going into the ring and trying to get their fights over with as quickly as possible. Brock and Ibragimov, however, took the opposite approach, and seemed to be pacing themselves extremely cautiously.

Brock, 224, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Ibragimov, 219½, Hallandale, Florida, both moved around slowly in the opening round. Before the fight, Ibragimov said he came to America to learn the American style of fighting, but he still has the typical stand-up-straight European style with his chin up and hands held high. Brock was trying to pin the former Uzbekistan Olympian down, but couldn't get anything going as Ibragimov was giving him a lot of movement.

In the second round, Brock landed some good left hooks to Ibragimov's body, trying to slow him down and stop his movement. The first three rounds were close. Brock seemed to be looking for one big shot, while Ibragimov was jabbing and getting out of the way.

PHOTO BY RICK GUZMAN

Lackluster Brock buzzes Ibragimov with a right

In the middle rounds, Brock, 31, was in control, slowing down Ibragimov, 31, a little and landing some solid right hands to his head. Referee Vic Drakulich (USA) did a good job keeping control of the fight, even though the fighters clashed heads a lot.

Around the midpoint of the fight, Brock started to use his left jab, knocking Ibragimov's head back every time he landed the shot. By the final four rounds, it was clear that Brock, 29-0 (22), was the physically stronger of the two men, and he was able to push Ibragimov, 21-1-1 (13), around the ring.

Ibragimov sporadically threw his right hand, but it was more of a slap than a strong punch. Probably the best shot of the fight came in the 12th round, when Brock caught Ibragimov with a clean right hand to the head just as he was throwing a left jab. The Uzbek appeared to be hurt, but the final bell was in sight and he survived.

Some of the rounds were close, but the judges at ringside all scored in favor of Brock. Lou Filippo (USA) saw it 117-

PHOTO BY RICK GUZMAN

Quintana keeps Julio at bay with southpaw jab

111, Adelaide Byrd (USA) scored it 119-109, and Robert Hoyle (USA) had it 115-113. THE RING's score was 117-111, also for Brock. But perhaps more telling and significant than any score was the reaction of the fans, which included much booing throughout.

Brock, who is a tap dancer, possesses some of the worst footwork in boxing and it looked as if he was falling over himself at times during the fight. But at least he tried (unsuccessfully) to make a fight of it. Ibragimov should take most of the blame for the lackluster action.

Brock neglected to say whom he would be fighting next, but Carl Moretti of his promotional company, Main Events, discussed a possible fight with IBF beltholder Wladimir Klitschko later in the year.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Main Events**
(6-24-06)
Wayne McCullough

Carlos Quintana W 12 Joel Julio

Las Vegas, Nevada: Supposed super-prospect Julio's last 11 bouts had not gone past four rounds, and this fight, despite the opponent being undefeated, just like Julio, was generally expected to go much the same way. According to plan, Julio had Quintana on the deck in the first round. But little went according to plan after that, as Quintana outboxed Julio and went on to win a comprehensive decision over 12 rounds.

"It was a tough fight and a rough fight," Quintana said afterward. "I felt like I slipped when I got hit in the first round, but I wasn't hurt. I felt like I had total control from the first round on."

Julio, Monteria, Colombia, began the opening round hoping to do to Quintana, Moca, Puerto Rico, what he'd done to many of his previous opponents: knock him out early. Straight away he caught Quintana, 146, with a right hand to the head. The southpaw was moving to his left, which is dangerous against an orthodox fighter. Another right hand connected high on Quintana's head and sent him down, prompting referee Robert Byrd (USA) to start counting.

Quintana got up and slowly recovered, but Julio, 145, was trying to seize his opportunity and get the fight over with as quickly as he could. Quintana made that difficult for him, however, as he got smart and started moving to his right, ultimately avoiding Julio's right hands.

Quintana, 29, started to use his superior boxing skills from his southpaw stance. He would use his right jabs to set up his left, then punch and get out of the way. Julio, 21, landed some good uppercuts to his Quintana's body in the fourth, but he had very few good moments after that. Fighting in the outdoor arena at Caesars Palace in heat measuring over 100 degrees, Julio began to tire noticeably from that point forward. The last time he had fought past four rounds was in 2004, and that lack of experience showed. Julio had some good skills, but Quintana was just smarter and fitter. Every time Julio, 27-1 (24), threw his left, Quintana, 23-0 (18), would use his right shoulder to block the shot.

The fans were enjoying this fine display of boxing by Quintana, as he continued to punish Julio to the head and body. The left uppercuts to Julio's chin were landing nearly every time. His speed and accuracy were just too much for the slower, exhausted Julio. But in the final round, Julio got a little bit of an energy boost, winning the round on all the judges' scorecards while forcing Quintana to trade with him.

But that one round made no difference. The judges at ringside all scored the fight in Quintana's favor, with Burt Clements (USA) seeing it 117-111, Patricia Morse Jarman (USA) scoring it 115-112, and Dave Moretti (USA) having it 118-110. THE RING scored the fight 116-111 for Quintana.

Julio admitted, "I felt weak from the third round on and hurt my right hand in the third round too."

Julio has suffered a setback, but at just 21 years of age, he has plenty of time to learn from this defeat and come back a better fighter. Quintana, meanwhile, is now positioned for possible shots at Ricky Hatton or Antonio Margarito.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Main Events**
(6-24-06)
Wayne McCullough ■

(Continued from Page 28)

ing crowd. Ever the competitor, Jorge Jr. went about his business in the ring, outpointing Travis Hartman to earn a four-round victory.

Jorge Sr., wearing an orange dress shirt that looked like it could glow in the dark, went back to the dressing room to congratulate his son on his ninth pro victory. He wore a baby Suzy-Q hairstyle, but underneath it was a weathered face and cauliflower ears, battle scars from a 19-year, 98-fight pro career.

It made a stark contrast as father and son sat briefly next to each other, the old war-torn ring clown, and his fresh-faced son still basking from his most recent victory.

"I didn't want my son to box," Paez Sr. admitted. "I wanted him to go to school and do something through education. I know what it's like to get hit in the ring. I didn't want to see anyone hitting my son. But this was his idea. I was against it, but you know kids, they'll do the opposite. My son wanted to be a professional boxer. Right now, I just want to support him, but he has to dedicate himself to his career."

Something Jorge Sr. did not do frequently during a career that ended 79-14-5 (51), after his last fight in 2003.

"That's right, I never trained hard," Paez Sr. said with a whimsical look in his eyes. "I was a professional boxer who had to take care of his body. But when I was fighting, I never trained. I partied. It's something I tell my son all of the time, 'Go to the gym, train hard.' I don't want my son to go through what happened to me. I went through a lot of s___ to win a title. I just don't want my son to do the same things that I did. He has his own style, not mine. My son has to train hard. If he continues training hard, he'll win."

Presently, Jorge Jr. is gaining more attention from his name than anything he's done in the ring. He has fast hands, and he's shown decent power. But he's also 18. That's slightly younger than when his father began, at 19, in 1984. Jorge Jr. also seems to be on a steady, planned course upward. Jorge Sr. confronted a few bumps early in his career, starting 7-2-1 in his first 10 fights.

Paez Jr., however, is looking to build the kind of winning streak that made his father a star from '86 to '90. After suffering the second loss in his

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Jorge Paez Jr. lunges at Travis Hartman en route to securing a four-round unanimous decision. After an extended amateur career, the 18-year-old is being moved cautiously in the pros.

10th fight, Jorge Sr. didn't lose another fight for four years, amassing a 28-0-2 record during that span, which included winning the IBF featherweight belt from Calvin Grove, in August '88.

Down on the scorecards, Paez Sr. came back to knock down Grove three times in the 15th round to win the fight by majority decision. Jorge Jr. was eight months old at the time.

"Everyone saw me on TV," recalled Paez Sr., who made seven successful title defenses. "I remember picking up my son with one hand, he was so young, after I won the title."

But the partying caught up to him. In the latter stages of his career, Jorge Sr. was a capable fighter, though not quite good enough to get by Tony Lopez, Pernell Whitaker, Freddie Pendleton, and a young Olympic gold medalist named Oscar De La Hoya, who ironically happens to be Jorge Jr.'s promoter, under the Golden Boy banner.

"Jorge Jr. is only 18, and he seems more comfortable in the ring, which is unlike a lot of the sons of former fighters," Showtime boxing analyst Steve Farhood said. "That comfort zone comes from an extended amateur career. The kid had around 100 amateur fights, which is rare for Mexican kids, because they turn pro so early.

"People forget his father was a very good fighter, and they forget how tough Jorge Sr. was, because he was known for his flamboyance. Jorge Jr. is a little different than his dad. He's a good counter-puncher, and there is going to be pressure that's unique, pressure even his father didn't feel because of his last name."

Jorge Jr. didn't start to feel the full brunt of being the son of a famous fighter until he started competing as an amateur. It lingers today.

"I feel pressure now, trying to keep the name going," Paez Jr. said. "I was 16, and I used to think that if I lost a fight, maybe people wouldn't want to talk about me, or that I wasn't going to make it, like my father did. The way I dealt with it is the same way I've always dealt with it: Train hard and prepare for fights, which is something my father didn't do." ■

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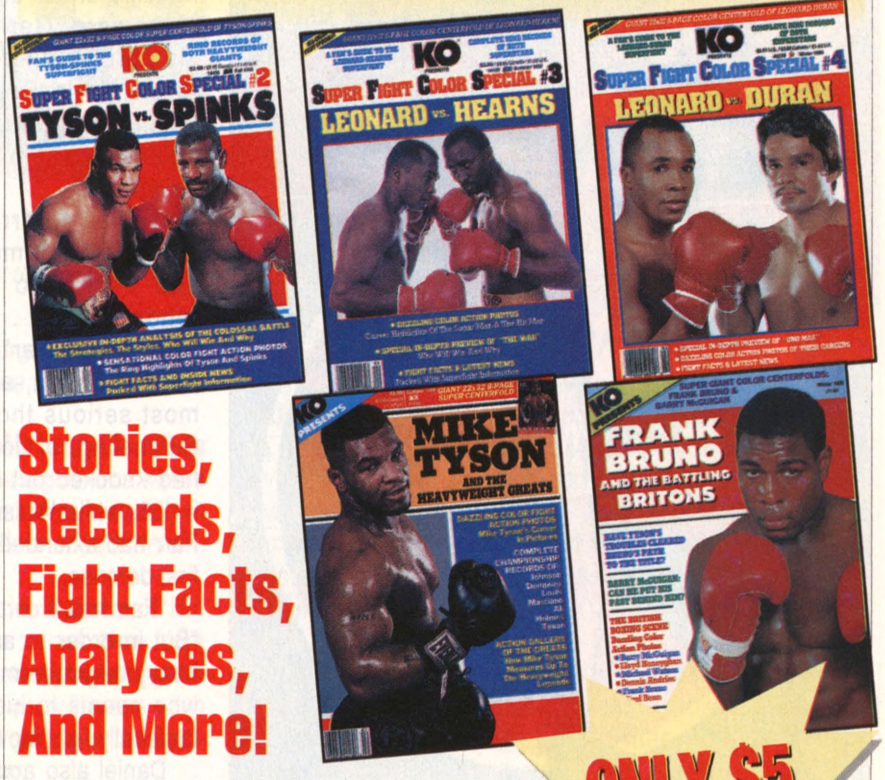

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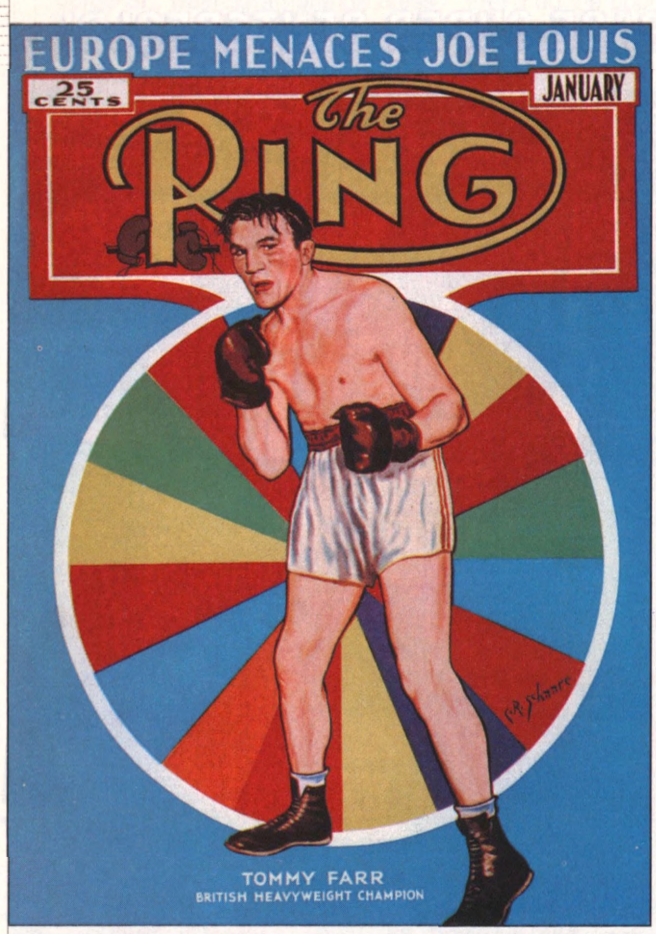
The Ring Flashback

Through the years with "The Bible of Boxing"

January 1938



COVER STORY: "Europe Menaces Joe Louis" by Daniel M. Daniel profiled a group of heavyweights from across the Atlantic Ocean who were lining up for a crack at the reigning world champion. Among them was British champion Tommy Farr, whose portrait, by illustrator C.R. Schaare, graced the cover.

World Champions

(for the period ended November 11, 1937)

Heavyweight: Joe Louis
Light Heavyweight: John Henry Lewis
Middleweight: Freddy Steele
Welterweight: Barney Ross
Lightweight: Lou Ambers
Featherweight: Henry Armstrong
Bantamweight: Harry Jeffra
Flyweight: Benny Lynch

Schmeling: Threat to unseat champ Louis

Other European heavies under discussion were Germans Max Schmeling and Arno Kolblein, Finland's Gunnar Barlund, and Spain's Isadoro Gastanaga.

Daniel correctly identified Schmeling and Farr, two contenders that "The Brown Bomber" had already fought, as the most serious threats. Schmeling, of course, had knocked out Louis in '36, while Welshman Farr had extended Louis 15 difficult rounds in the champ's first defense.

"Farr has a certain amount of cleverness," wrote Daniel. "But in order to achieve recognition as an accomplished heavyweight he must build up his punch ... for a big man who seems to hit from a set position, Farr delivers an unusually light blow."

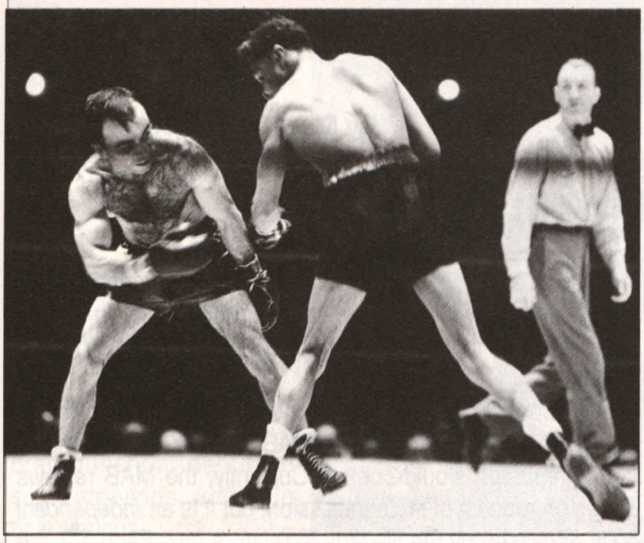
Daniel also accurately noted that "the one factor which is building against the German is time. He is getting old. Schmeling was born in 1905. In June he will be close to his 33rd birthday."

Farr never developed a big punch, lost four in a row after his brave bid to unseat Louis in '37, and fell out of serious contention. Schmeling, of course, was brutally kayoed by Louis in the opening round of their famous rematch.

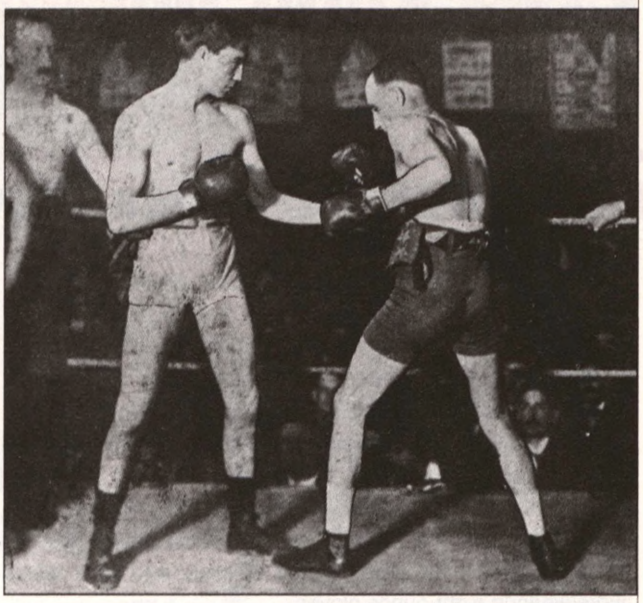
"Human Buzz-Saw" by Nat Fleischer and "Armstrong Reminds Igoe Of Famous Fighters Of Old" by Hype Igoe were separate features about newly crowned featherweight champion Henry Armstrong.

"It was a heart-gripping battle, one so savage as to be a reminder of those hectic mills between little Jack Sharkey and Joe Lynch that raised the roof off the old Garden a few years back," raved Fleischer in his coverage of Armstrong's sixth-round knockout of Petey Sarron to win the 126-pound title. "The little fellows, one a son of Ham, the other a hairy-chested youth of Syrian descendants, displayed a brand of courage that only two ring gladiators who possess true fighting heart ever show. No finer display has been seen in the Garden in many moons."

Igoe compared Armstrong to former featherweight



Armstrong (right) en route to taking featherweight title from Sarron



Mike Sullivan (right) squares off with Jimmy Gardner prior to 1905 bout won by Sullivan

greats Terry McGovern, Abe Attell, George Dixon, Aurelio Herrera, Dal Hawkins, and Johnny Kilbane.

"Gang Wars And The Politics Of The Prize Ring" by George T. Pardy was eighth in a series on "the hazards which boxing has hurdled over a stretch of almost 100 years to survive gang warfare, hoodlumism, and murder."

This issue's installment focused on the era of Bill Tweed, better known as Boss Tweed, a former New York City fireman who, by the 1869, was the most powerful political figure in the city. In those days, corrupt politicians such as Tweed were closely allied with street gangs, prize fighting, and, in the case detailed here, murder.

Pardy's fascinating article dealt specifically with the shooting of Tweed's political rival Florrie Scannell by ex-boxer Michael "Dark" Donohue. Thanks to help from Tweed, Donohue was never prosecuted, but Scannell's brother, John, finally reaped vengeance by shooting Donohue himself.

"Mike Sullivan's Death Recalls Famous Fights" by A.D. Phillips celebrated the career of one of the famous fighting twins, who had died in late-1937. His brother Jack survived until 1947.

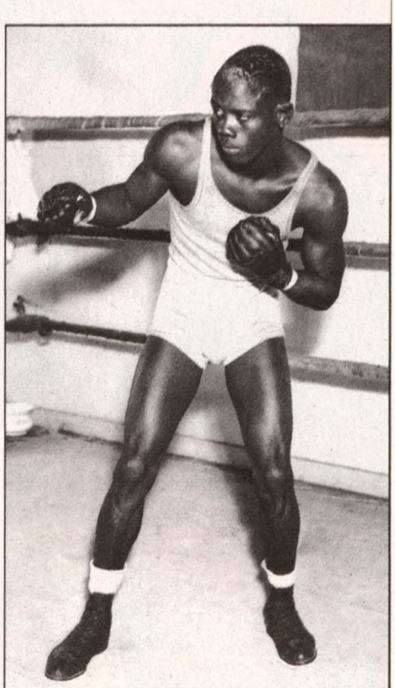
Two of Mike's best efforts resulted in draws with future Hall of Famers Joe Gans and Dixie Kid. Mike won the California version of the welterweight title in 1907 with a 20-round decision over Honey Mellody.

"Timely Chatter From Great Britain" Correspondent John S. Sharpe reported on the world flyweight championship bout in Glasgow, Scotland, between local hero Benny Lynch and previously unbeaten Englishman Peter Kane that drew a massive crowd of 50,000 to the Shawfield Park soccer stadium.

After suffering a knockdown in the first round, Kane held his own until Lynch began to dominate in the 10th. In the 13th, Lynch "put Kane down with a corking right for seven, and upon rising another right-hand punch put him down for the full count. He was half hanging over the bottom rope when the referee, Mr. W. H. Barrington Dalby, counted him out. Amidst the most astonishing scene imaginable."

"Southern California" Vacationing heavyweight champion Joe Louis drew large crowds throughout the state with his softball team. Plans were also in the works for Louis to make a movie.

"Boxing In Cuba" While plugging an upcoming bout between Kid Chocolate and Juan Belmonte, local scribe Milt Baron criticized the fact that Chocolate was rated only ninth by THE RING among featherweights. "The Kid is in splendid shape and certainly deserves better," wrote Baron. Oddly enough, the Belmonte bout never took place, and Chocolate retired at the end of '38, even though he went undefeated in his last 36 bouts.



■ *Was Kid Chocolate rated too low?*

[The Fight Doctor]

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

New Nevada Rules Flawed

The Nevada State Athletic Commission recently approved recommendations from the Health and Safety Committee that all fighters competing in any weight class at 135 pounds or above be required to wear 10-ounce gloves, rather than eight-ounce gloves. The committee was formed after two fighters died and two others suffered career-ending brain injuries in 2005

This arbitrary change is not based on any research, but rather on a fact that most of the fighters who have died in Nevada were in the lower weight classes, and as a result were wearing eight-ounce gloves.

I promote research to determine *all* the factors that contribute to ring death, and perhaps this change should be studied. However, gloves are designed to protect the hands, not the head. Requiring lower-weighted fighters to use better-padded gloves will just give them an opportunity to deliver more blows to their opponent's head. To me, this is playing with fire.

The Commission also unanimously voted to dissolve the state's Medical Advisory Board (MAB) in favor of a committee the commission would control. Currently, the MAB reviews issues on request of the commission, but it is an *independent* body. If passed by the Nevada legislature next February, the commission will dictate the physicians utilized and terminate members as they see fit. While the intention of this change may have some merit, it demonstrates great potential for at least the appearance of conflict and impropriety.

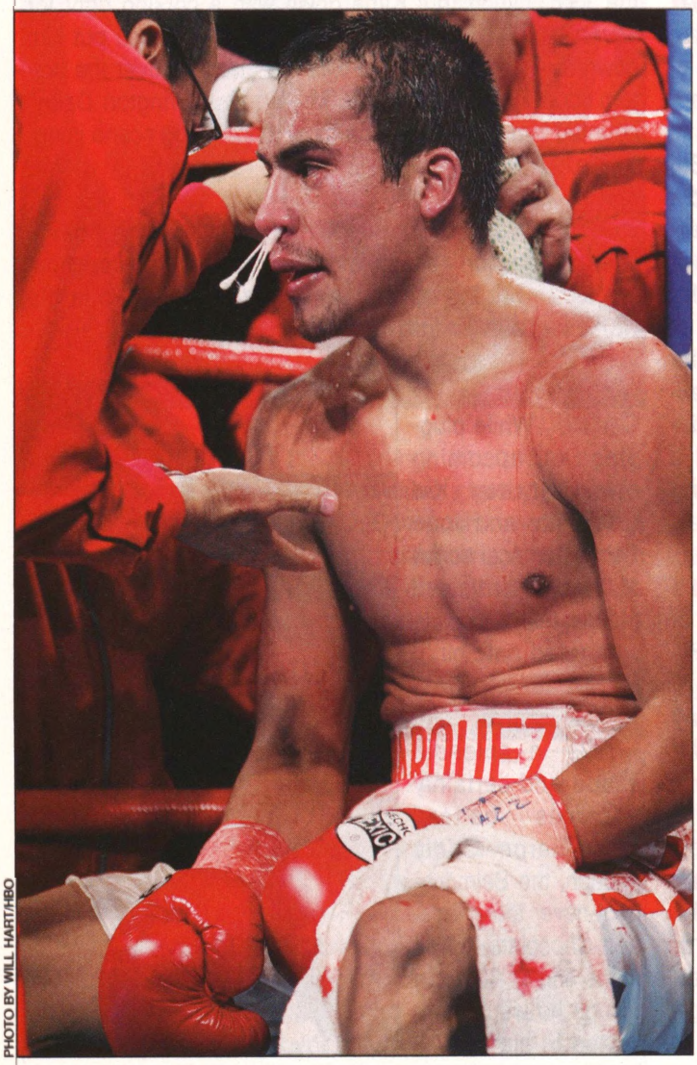


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Careful with those Q-Tips

Ask The Doctor

Almost every time I get hit in the nose it bleeds, although I have never broken it. How can I prevent this from happening? What is the best way to treat it during a fight?

More often than not, a nosebleed from a punch is not synonymous with a fracture. It indicates a broken blood vessel that can occur from dryness, congestion, foreign material, or trauma. The position of your septum (the area dividing the inside of the nose) should also be examined. If damaged, chronic breathing problems or a saddle deformity (boxer's nose) could develop.

Q-Tips should not be used as a weapon. The Q-Tip should deliver epinephrine or neosynephrine to the swollen or bleeding blood vessel, but poking it deeply into the nasal passage can do nothing but further harm an already tender area.

Moreover, a fighter should not blow his nose during a match. Instead, he should use saline nose drops to prevent dryness (which are legal in every jurisdiction), and apply ice before contact. Ice applied with pressure directly to the top of the nose where the cartilage ends and the bone begins can also help stop bleeding.

If a fighter does suffer a broken nose, it is best treated within the first three days of injury. If delayed beyond seven days, it can result in poor bone healing and require surgery.

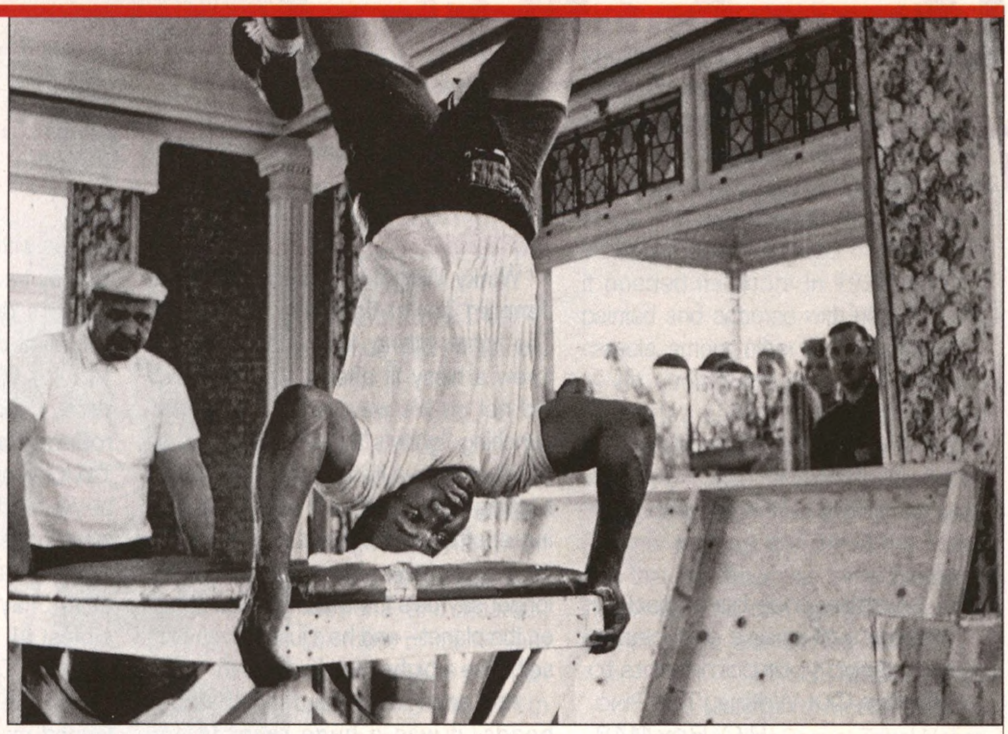
What are the best legal supplements I can take during training? I am just starting my career and can't afford all the fancy brands I see some boxers take at the gym.

According to strength and conditioning guru Dave "Scooter" Honig, there are three important supple-

ments you should take:

•Glutamine supports muscle building. Glutamine will help increase growth hormone, decrease muscle breakdown during exercise, increase endurance, decrease muscle recovery time, decrease the chances of infection/illnesses by boosting the immune system, and can prevent overtraining. It is also believed that glutamine will improve brain function, decrease sugar cravings, and help heal wounds.

•Branched Chain Amino Acids will boost your immunity and stimulate protein production by increasing testosterone, growth hormone, and insulin. They will also stimulate fat loss and decrease muscle soreness after training, increase endurance, and prevent the breakdown of muscle protein.



Sonny Liston does some strenuous neck stretching

•Protein powder should be added to food in addition to sports drinks that can replenish electrolytes and minerals. Most athletes cannot get enough protein in the meals they eat during training.

In some jurisdictions they stop a fight whenever there is bleeding from the ear? Is that necessary, and if so, why?

There are several conditions that can cause bleeding from the ear during a fight. But it is only serious if it originates deep in the ear canal, as that can indicate a fracture at the base of the skull. This is sometimes hard to detect, but may occur along with a broken eardrum, and result in bruising behind the ear or the tissue around the eyes, causing a raccoon appearance.

If there is the possibility of a fracture, immediate evaluation is required. A ruptured eardrum can result in pain, bleeding from the ear, hearing loss, and ringing or dizziness.

The ears are susceptible to blood clot formation when punched, compressed, or repeatedly rubbed. If not drained, the ear cartilage begins to contract on itself, forming what is commonly known as a "cauliflower ear."

Any drainage from a fighter's ear needs close medical evaluation. On occasion, an untreated ruptured eardrum can require antibiotics. Clear fluid drainage can be a spinal fluid leak from a fractured skull and, if untreated, may result in meningitis (infection within the lining of the brain).

How close to fight time is it safe for me to eat? What is the best thing to eat the day of the fight?

You should eat the same foods the day of the fight as you have been consuming during training camp. It takes approximately six hours for food to clear from your stomach. However, carbohydrates, including pasta and fruit, will clear more quickly. Sweet potatoes, baked potatoes, and brown rice are all great suggestions for a before-fight meal.

What exercises can I do to strengthen my neck? Will that prevent me from getting knocked out?

Many factors can prevent you from getting knocked out, including a good chin tuck, well-made mouthguard, learning how to avoid getting hit, deflecting punches from landing square on the jaw, good anatomy, and strong neck muscles.

Mike Tyson is a great example of a boxer who firmly believed that the strength of his neck muscles enabled him to better withstand a punch.

Of course, if hit in the right place, any fighter can be dropped. Nonetheless, a strong core of muscles encircling the neck, especially the trapezius muscles, will help. Some trainers recommend using weights, but using your own resistance will work as well. Here are three examples:

•Neck extension exercise is as simple as nodding "yes." Seated in a chair, place your hands on your forehead; apply constant tension as you slowly bring your chin down to your chest.

•Neck flexion should begin with your head straight ahead, place your hands on the back of your head for resistance, and slowly move your head to where you are looking up.

•Lateral flexion exercises target one side of the neck at a time. Staring straight ahead, place your hand slightly above your ear to add resistance, and move your head as close to your shoulder as possible.

Perform two sets of 8-12 repetitions for each exercise. ■

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Loudmouths Licked

Winky Wright's behavior after the Jermain Taylor fight was deplorable. The lighter-hitting, less effective fighter threw a hissy fit after a close decision did not go his way, while the harder-punching fighter's fighter called it as he saw it and gave it to us straight. Winky's bitching was classless. I won't be watching another of his fights. He holds no intrigue anymore. Moreover, he can no longer say he's the most avoided fighter on the planet—and he's just proven himself to be a bigheaded loudmouth.

And speaking of loud-mouthed bigheads, it was a huge relief to see Antonio Tarver get his head handed to him by Bernard Hopkins.

LAWRENCE DONNELLY
pucklptmd@hotmail.com

Broadcast Bias

After watching the Jermain Taylor-Winky Wright fight, I am, as usual, disgusted with HBO's commentators. Why do they have to blow up everything their fighters do and downplay what the opponent does? I scored the fight 116-112 for Wright. Every round I gave Winky, I thought he won easily, and the rounds Taylor won, he barely won. Taylor's punches were continuously being blocked by Wright (just as they were in the Bernard Hopkins fights), but the announcers went wild over how great Taylor was and downplayed almost all of Winky's clean, accurate punches. Did anyone else notice that in Taylor's last three fights, his opponents landed more punches and threw less, but Jermain never lost? Kind of strange, isn't it?

MATT FIELDS
Fayette, OH

Too Many Divisions

Boxing's big problem, bigger than the alphabet belts, is too many weight classes. Bogus arguments about disproportionate advantage due to bodyweight hide the truth—too many competitors of marginal talent filling out too many divisions. Ezzard Charles, Rocky Marciano, and the young Muhammad Ali make a mockery of the idea that effective heavyweights must be as large as freight trains.

ED CHABEREK
Superior, MT

Horrible Hamed

If the things I read about Naseem Hamed in the September 2006 issue of THE RING Double ("Judge Gives Naz Max") are true, he certainly belongs in jail, but for a lot longer than 15 months. I knew the guys head wasn't screwed on tight, but to walk away from an accident like that is just plain callous. He carried that same attitude he had in the ring outside of it too. Hamed thought he was better than anybody until Marco Antonio Barrera brought him back to earth. This last time he

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

The draw between middleweight champion Jermain Taylor and Winky Wright prompted many readers to write and express their feelings. Lawrence Donnelly was turned off by Wright's post-fight complaints, while Matt Fields believes Winky had every right to complain about the decision.

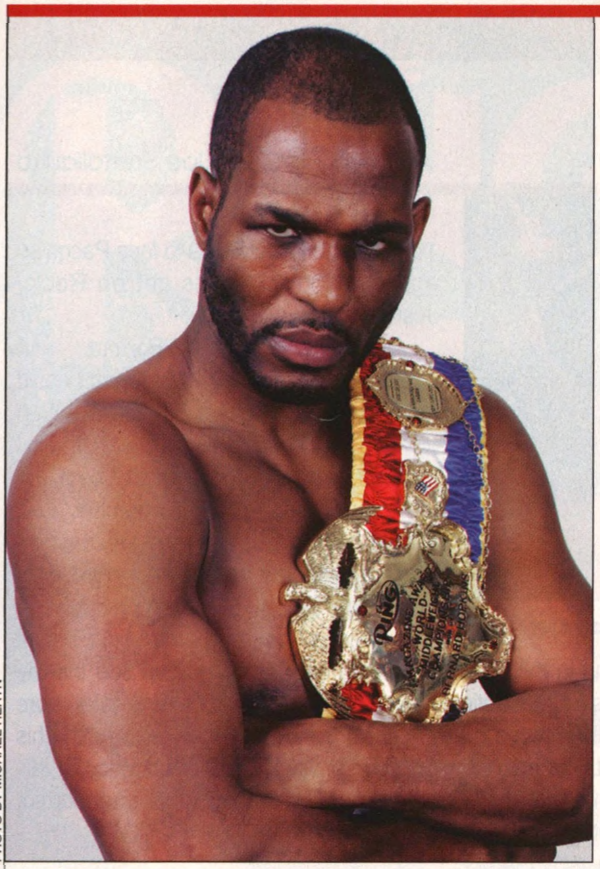


PHOTO BY MICHAEL HEAYN

Bernard Hopkins' upset victory over Antonio Tarver has caused some people to reconsider their opinion of "The Executioner." Reader Patrick Tee was never a Hopkins fan, but still writes to give B-Hop his props.

was brought back to earth by Judge Alan Goldsack.

GLOVER HILL III
Brooklyn, NY

Classy Cast

THE RING did a very nice job with the bios of the 16 boxers who are due to appear on *The Contender*, in the September 2006 issue. The lineup is very different from the first season when some of the fighters were beginners who had been featured in "New Faces." This season, there are some world-class fighters among the cast. In fact, one wonders just how competitive the fights will be with seasoned fighters such as Steve Forbes, Ebo Elder, and Michael Clark in the mix. My own feeling is the great equalizer will be the fact that the elimination fights are only five rounds. A 12-round mindset could be a detriment.

MIKE ABBEY
Fairfield, ME

Dilemma Defined

Here's what's wrong with boxing in a nutshell: Dominick Guinn is shown to millions on free TV, while Manny Pacquiao fights on pay-per-view. No wonder boxing has dropped out of the mainstream!

MICHAEL CARR
molt_422yahoo.com

Foxwoods Rebuttal

Foxwoods Resort Casino in southeastern Connecticut has been staging fights, both professional and amateur, for most of its 14-year history. We are approaching the 100th professional boxing event, a milestone we could hit in the next few months. We've had some of the sport's biggest names here, large crowds to watch them, and huge television audiences for many of them.

That's why the story about boxing at Indian-owned casinos in your August 2006 issue ("Native-American Casinos & Boxing: A Partnership That Changed The Sport's Landscape") read like a roundhouse punch that came from somewhere deep in the cheap seats. It presented a distorted snapshot of what actually happens at Foxwoods.

The story is notable for a number of reasons, not the least among them being the writer's failure to give us an opportunity to explain how boxing is important here—both for us as an entertainment center and for boxing fans in New England. That would have put in some context the positive story of boxing here at Foxwoods, and, by extension, at other Indian-owned casinos.

He failed to tell the real story of how Indian casinos have breathed a bit of life into what some consider a dying sport, of how boxing fits into the overall entertainment offerings at casinos across the country. Not only that, the writer took the liberty of slamming us without giving us an opportunity to respond. Fight fans were not well-served by the article.

One almost laughable example of the writer's bias came when he accused us in the "early days" of being "a drab place with old, disgusting carpets ... " Whatever else one thinks of Foxwoods, it opened its doors in 1992, brightly painted and adorned with new, not old, carpets, among other floor covering.

He quoted one promoter who has presented shows at Foxwoods, and then went on to question the man's integrity because he dared to say something positive about his experience here. For me, that just confirmed the suspicion that the writer was more interested in promoting his own agenda, and not in providing fight fans with the facts.

BRUCE MACDONALD
Manager of Media Relations
Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation

Editor's note: Although THE RING stands by the original article, we are publishing Mr. MacDonald's unedited letter in the spirit of fair play. It should be noted, however, that writer Don Stradley placed three telephone calls to Foxwoods seeking comment for his article, but was unable to reach Mr. MacDonald or anyone else who was willing to act as spokesperson for Foxwoods' boxing program.

Appreciating A Legend

I have to admit a newfound and thoroughly wholehearted respect for Bernard Hopkins. Having been a fan of the great Marvin Hagler and his go-for-broke style, I've always disliked B-Hop's cautious but effective approach. To Hopkins' credit, however, he did make a record 20 defenses, easily surpassing the great Carlos Monzon—and rarely if ever got hurt in the process. And, of course, most recently, at an age (41) when most fighters are resting comfortably in their rocking chairs, Hopkins goes up two weight classes and beats an excellent champion in Antonio Tarver. I have to hand it to Hopkins; we all do. What a finale to an amazing career!

PATRICK TEE
Montreal, Quebec ■

[Looking Ahead]

By Joe Santoliquito

Barrera And Juarez Set For Rematch

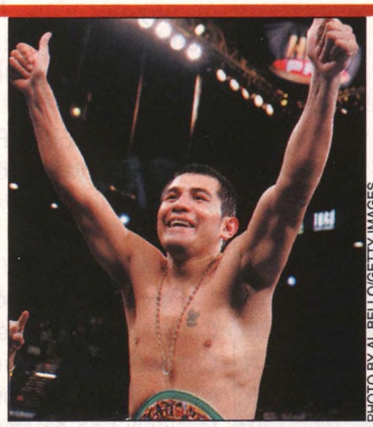


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Barrera says he's not finished yet

Marco Antonio Barrera has heard the negative comments and knows a lot of media thinks that all the tough fights are catching up with him. But the WBC super featherweight titlist and future Hall of Famer wants boxing fans to know that he isn't finished just yet, especially not after the narrow decision victory Barrera earned over **Rocky Juarez** on May 20 at Los Angles' Staples Center.

Barrera, 62-4 (42), is so adamant that he still has some juice left in those 32-year-old legs that he's agreed to a rematch with the former United States Olympian, set for September 16 at the MGM Grand, in Las Vegas.

The first time Barrera and Juarez met, the official scores were added incorrectly and the outcome was wrongly declared a draw. Upon further review of the scorecards, it was discovered that Barrera had edged out a split decision. But it was pretty much unanimous that Juarez had given him all he could handle.

"I learned a lot from the first fight," Barrera said. "It's difficult to fight a young, hungry fighter with a lot of amateur background and experience like Juarez. I thought Juarez would be as tough as he was. He was the second Olympic fighter that I faced, the first being **Kennedy McKinney**. There won't be too much difference in the rematch, but what I will say is that people will see the Marco Antonio Barrera that people are used to seeing. Nothing happened to me the first time. There was one punch that got me on the nose and I couldn't execute the rest of my fight the same way."

Barrera's dream opponent in September would have been **Manny Pacquiao**, the powerpunching Filipino who scored an 11th-round stoppage over Barrera in November 2003. But because of scheduling conflicts between the two fighters, there has yet to be a rematch. So instead, Barrera will fight Juarez again in an attempt to score a more definitive victory and stem talk of immediate retirement.

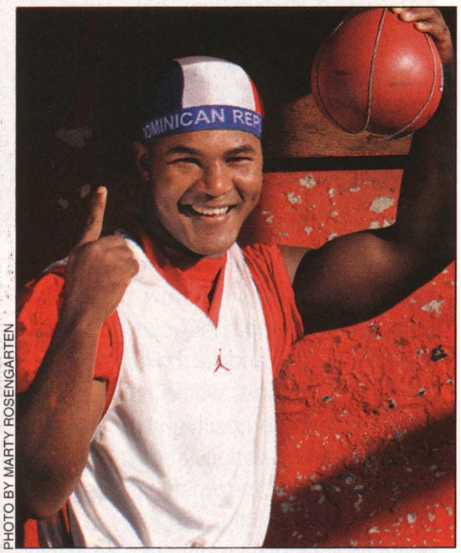


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Guzman is looking to top Barrios

"Retirement is close, but not as close as this year," said Barrera, laughing. "One bad performance and the press likes to write me off. The press not once, not twice has written me off, but about 20 times in my career. I'm used to it. I feel good, 100 percent. I would love to face Pacquiao again, but my mind is set on Rocky Juarez."

And Juarez is fixated on Barrera.

"I can beat myself up over what I could have and should have done in the first fight," said Juarez, 25-2 (18). "I think I learned that I belong with the best out there, but I didn't fight 110 percent like I should have. I had too much respect for Barrera. I should have taken more risks than I did. I thought I had to be careful.

"I believe I caught Barrera with a right hand in the first round, and from there, you can see that he was being cautious. But I still feel that I'll have to take more risks. Not too many fighters get this kind of opportunity this fast. For me, this won't be so much about confidence in this rematch. It will be more about determination, more about not waiting to get in there."

Listen Up

The third fight between **Manny Pacquiao** and **Erik Morales** appears to be set for November 18, at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas. The fight will be shown on HBO Pay-Per-View and promoted by Top Rank. Pacquiao-Morales III will be a 12-round junior lightweight bout ... It looks like the Barrera-Juarez undercard is going to be star-studded, featuring **Jorge Barrios**, rated fifth by THE RING at junior lightweight, going up against undefeated **Joan Guzman**, rated 10th. Barrios, 46-2-1 (33), enters the fight coming off an impressive first-round knockout of previously undefeated—and overmatched—**Janos Nagy**, while Guzman, 25-0 (13), dominated **Javier Jauregui** in his last outing. Both Barrios and Guzman are action fighters, giving this matchup a must-see rating for excitement ... Also added to the Barrera-Juarez undercard is a title defense by **Israel Vazquez**, THE RING's world junior featherweight champion, against **Jhonny Gonzalez**. This fight could easily be a main event feature, with Gonzalez, 33-4 (28), stepping up from bantamweight to take on the hard-punching Vazquez, 40-3 (30), who hasn't lost since 2002 and carries an eight-fight winning streak into the tilt. Gonzalez also hasn't lost since '02 and has a 19-fight winning streak. ■

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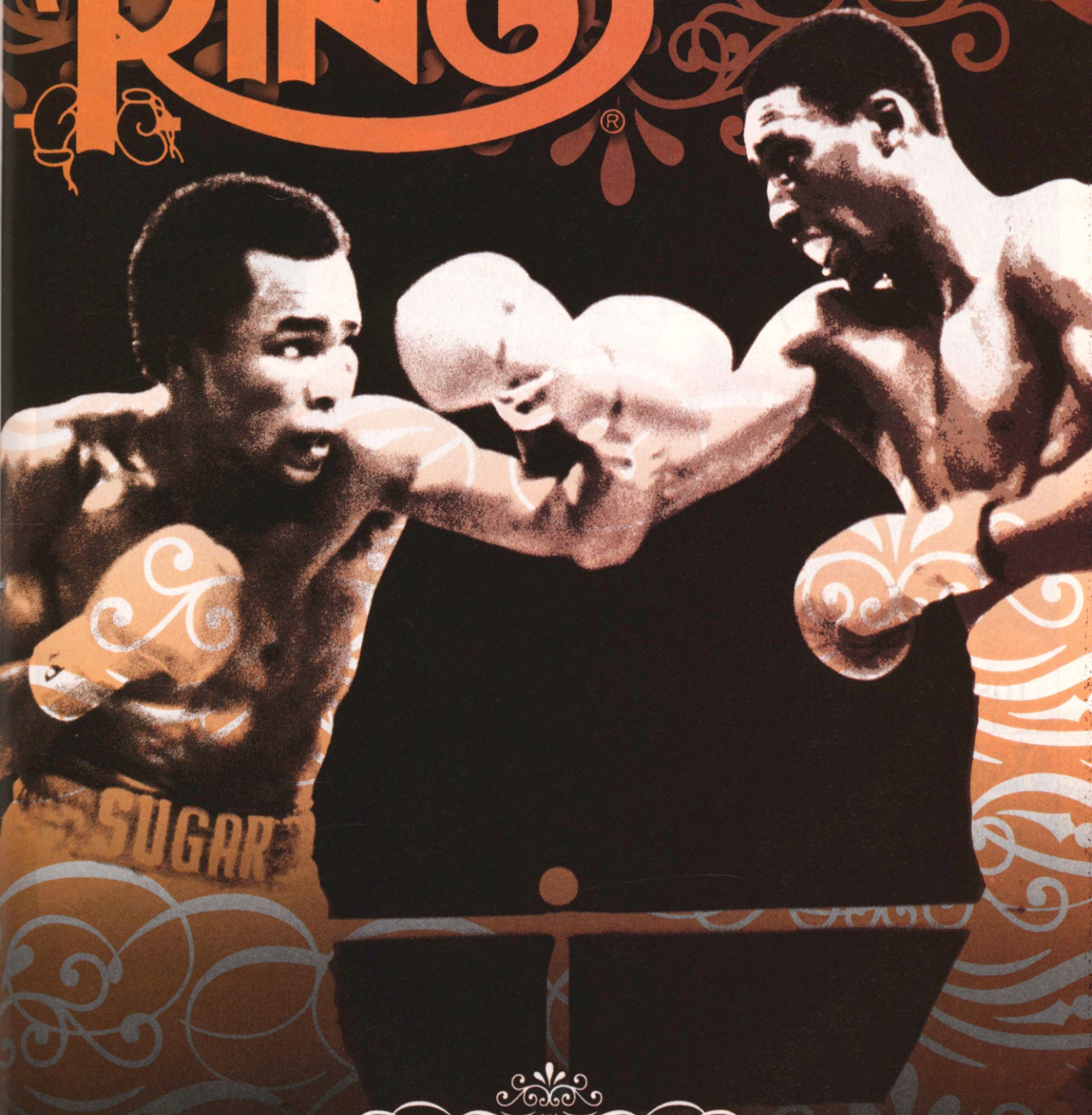

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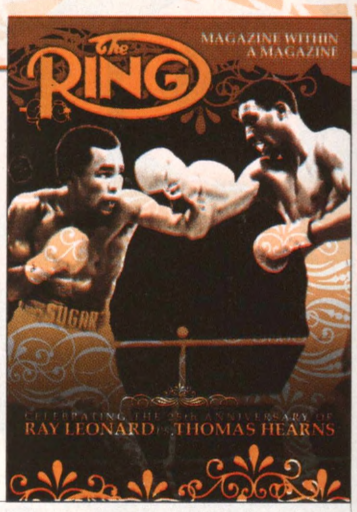

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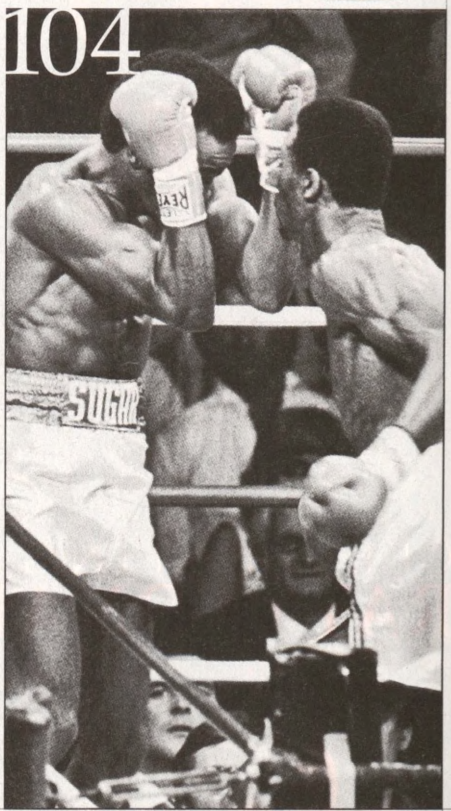

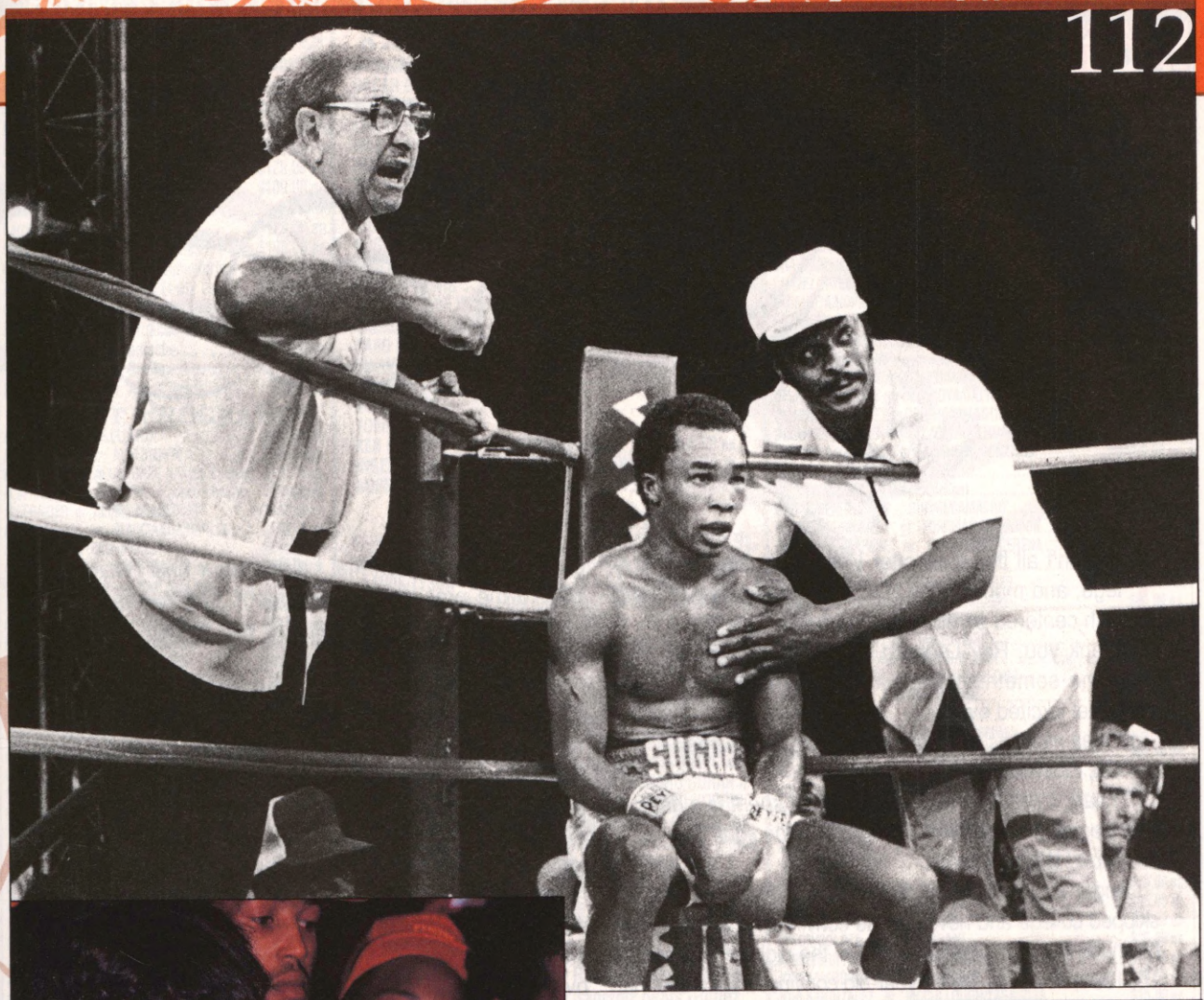

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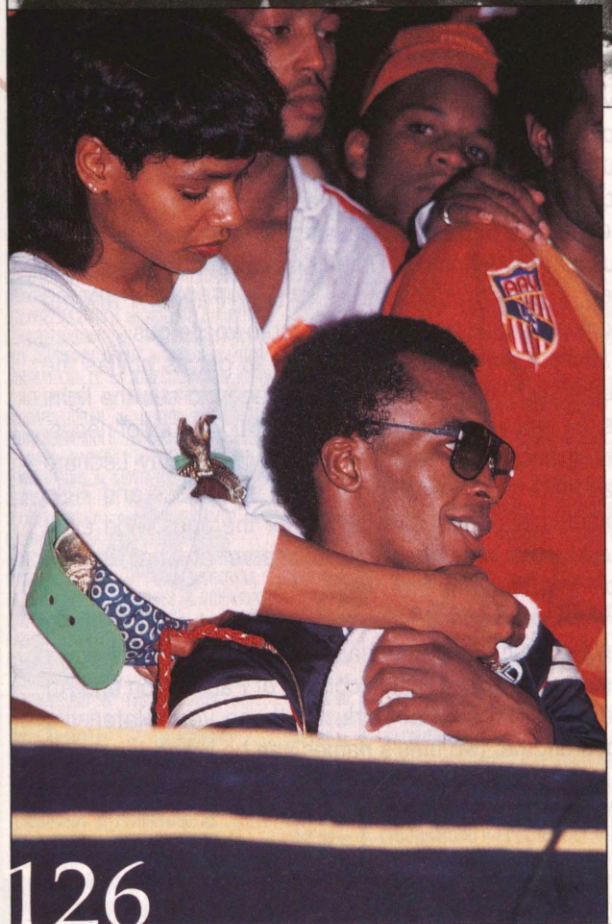

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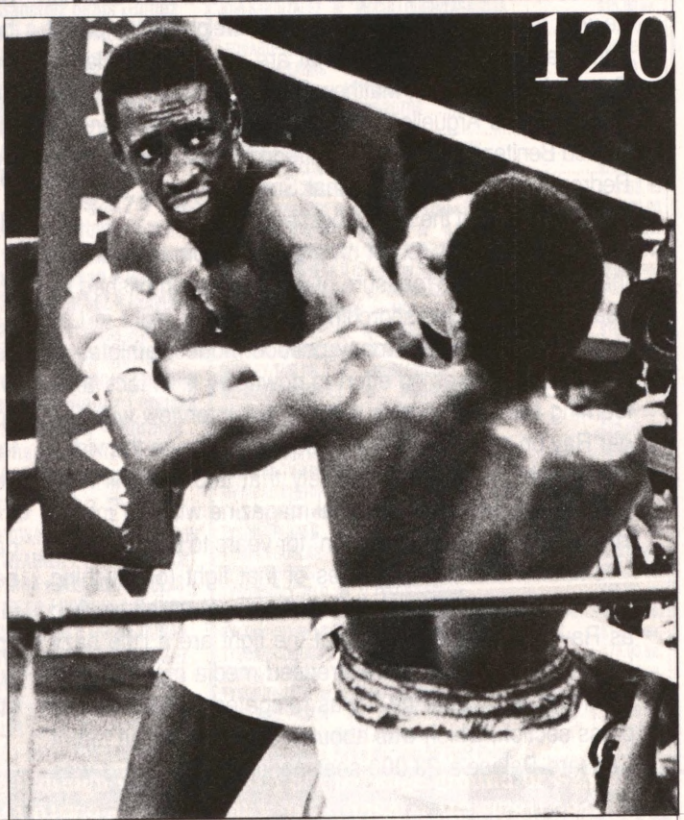

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Publisher's Note

It wasn't all that long after I had graduated from college, and much of the talk among the people I hung with centered on our new careers.

Thank you, Ray Leonard and Thomas Hearns. You gave me something even my non-boxing fan friends could get excited over.

"I was hired as an editor of a boxing magazine,"

"Oh, how nice."

"Yeah, it really is. Just last month, I spent five days in Las Vegas. Covered the Leonard-Hearns fight."

"Wow! What a job!"

Sugar Ray Leonard is three months my junior, but he skipped college and never had to convince his buddies that he made the right career move. On the night of September 16, 1981, however, the 25-year-old convinced the world that he was, at the very least, the best welterweight on the planet and, placed among fighters that are today in the Hall of Fame—Marvin Hagler, Matthew Saad Muhammad, Michael Spinks, Alexis Arguello, Salvador Sanchez, Jeff Chandler, Wilfred Benitez, Aaron Pryor, Wilfredo Gomez, and Eusebio Pedroza—it can be argued that Sugar Ray was the very best during one of the sport's best eras.

You're not likely to get an argument from Leonard on that. He knows the measure of what he accomplished by beating Hearns that scorching hot summer night in Las Vegas, and, unlike so many pseudo-modest athletes of our time, he makes no effort to downplay it. In fact, after learning from Jeff Ryan's recent Q&A interview with Sugar Ray on page 126 that he frequently flips on the video of the fight to this day, it's likely that Leonard will read and re-read THE RING'S special magazine within a magazine tribute to "The Showdown" for years to come.

I know I will. My memories of that fight (or anything else that happened a quarter-century ago) aren't as vivid as Ray's. Maybe the details of the fight are a little hazy because, as the second accredited media member representing *KO* magazine, I was relegated to the auxiliary press section, which was about five rows from the top of Caesars Palace's 23,000-seat parking lot arena. I was so far from the action that I didn't know until I made my way to the pressroom that Hearns had nearly closed Leonard's left eye and Sugar Ray was perilously close to losing the fight.

But, to this young reporter, The Showdown was more than a fight to decide the undisputed champion of what was indisputably the premier division in boxing. It was the first time I experienced a Las Vegas superfight, and, while I may have to refer to the stories reproduced from THE RING and *KO* for the details of the action, I'll never forget the feeling of attending the event. I was immediately stricken by the fact that the majority of the crowd seemed to be pulling for Hearns. I didn't really understand that. I knew that even after conclusive victories over Wilfred Benitez and Roberto Duran, many hardcore boxing fans stubbornly refused to give Leonard his due, but the overwhelming support for Hearns seemed rather odd. What I later learned was that the split between Hearns and Leonard fans was probably closer to 50-50, but that thousands of Detroiters had made the trek to Vegas, and probably not so many Palmer Parkers. Hometown fans tend to be a lot more vociferous.

By the time the action started to get as hot as the Vegas air, the Leonard-doubters began to see the light. As the fancy boxer turned to nasty slugger out of necessity, it became apparent to all that Sugar Ray Leonard was more than media hype and a pretty face and 7-Up commercials—he was a fighter for the ages. And even the Motown contingent had to marvel at what he was able to accomplish that night.

As I approached New York on my return flight three days later, it struck me that 500,000 people were down below watching a reunion concert of Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel in Central Park. All these years later, it's apparent that two men's names can be linked for eternity, whether they're harmonizing or trying to do each other harm.

Stu Saks

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An Insider's Analysis Of The Leonard-Hearns Showdown

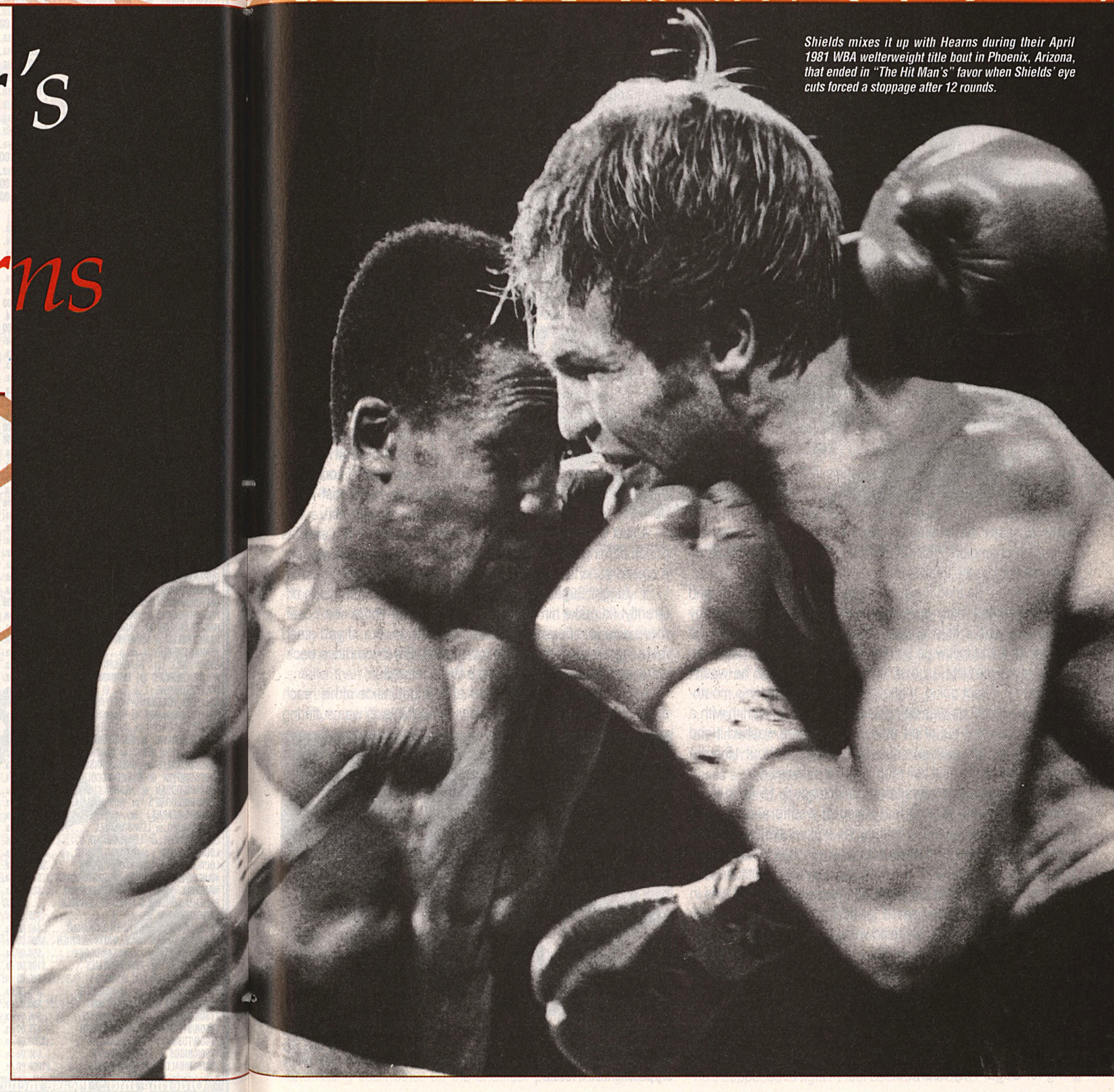
By Randy Shields

(Reprinted from *KO*, October 1981)

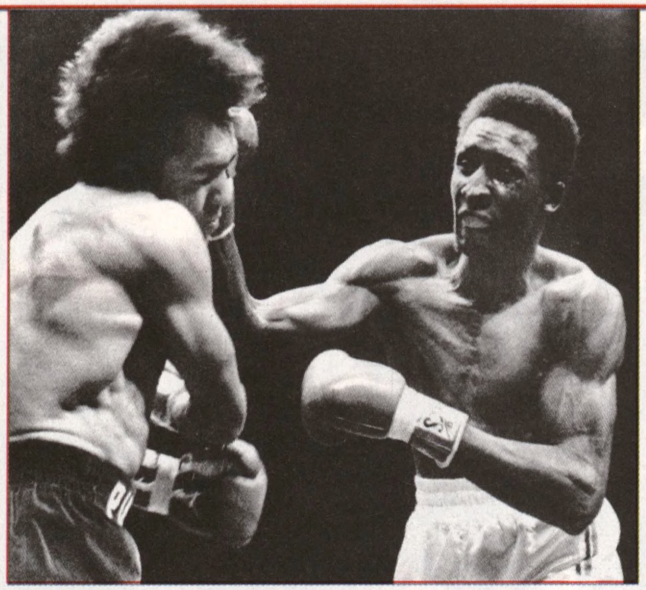
In the days preceding a superfight, everyone becomes a boxing expert. From the local bartender to the veteran sportswriter on the boxing beat, predictions, convictions, and opinions are spewed forth for all to hear. It happened with Ali-Frazier I. It happened last year with Duran-Leonard I. It will happen this autumn with Leonard-Hearns.

When WBC champion Sugar Ray Leonard and WBA champion Thomas Hearns clash in their inevitable welterweight unification showdown, Leonard will probably be a slight favorite. But only slight. While half the public believes Sugar Ray will be too fast, too smart, and too sweet for his undefeated counterpart, the other half is sure "The Hit Man" has the ammunition to score another awesome knockout.

In analyzing this sizzling confrontation, ***KO Magazine*** *contacted the only man who can speak from experience, welterweight contender Randy Shields. The veteran boxer-puncher from North Hollywood, California, defeated Leonard in the amateurs and lost a close 10-round decision to him as a pro in 1978. And in his most recent effort, Shields took Hearns 12 rounds before retiring due to eye cuts. A thinking man's fighter who has also challenged such superstars as Wilfred Benitez and Pipino Cuevas, Shields agreed to share his thoughts on Leonard-Hearns with us.*



Shields mixes it up with Hearns during their April 1981 WBA welterweight title bout in Phoenix, Arizona, that ended in "The Hit Man's" favor when Shields' eye cuts forced a stoppage after 12 rounds.



Hearns clocks Pipino Cuevas with a right hand en route to winning the WBA 147-pound belt via second-round knockout. Shields, who lost a close 15-round decision to Cuevas, confirmed that Hearns had a bigger punch than the Mexican slugger.

I first fought Ray Leonard in May 1973—I think it was May 12—at the National AAU Championships in Boston. We were in the 139-pound final, but I only weighed 127. I weighed in with all my clothes on, but I had to put on somebody's construction boots to reach the minimum weight to fight. Leonard was the defending champion. He was already a big honcho because he had won the title the year before.

I remember he tried to psych me out. We met in the ring, and when we started fighting, I was just as fast as he was. But my countering was a little better. When he'd throw a punch, I'd counter off it and follow up on him. He wasn't used to that. Even when he hit me with a good shot, I'd counter, and he wasn't used to that. I kept going. In the third round he stuck his mouthpiece out—I think he was doing it for a rest—and I hit him with a jab and knocked it out of his mouth. The referee washed it and put it back in, and we went back to fighting for about 15 more seconds before the final bell rang. I won the decision.

We met again five years later, on October 6, 1978, in Baltimore. There really wasn't that much of a difference in him. When I fought him in the amateurs, he was already a polished fighter. He did throw a lot more bolo-type punches though. I was in good physical shape for the fight, but my mental attitude was off. I had just gone through some bad experiences and I was in a little bit of debt. I was geared for fighting, but I had so many other things on my mind. My mind wasn't fully on the fight.

I just gutted my way through. For one, I fought him in his hometown. His sister sang the National Anthem and they made a big thing of that. His brother fought in the semi-main event and they made a big thing of that. Then they took off the houselights and put the spotlight on Sugar Ray as he entered the ring to this music. They were just gearing everything for Sugar Ray Leonard.

Then we fought. He landed one good punch that I remember, in the sixth round. It didn't hurt me, but it did set me back. Then he followed up with his fast flurry the way he does, and he never touched me. He didn't hit me once. I got him on the ropes and kept hitting him, but the referee [Tom Kelly] kept breaking us, even though we weren't tied up.

The referee almost got knocked out in the ninth round. Every time he would yell "break," Sugar Ray Leonard would throw a cheap shot, a left hook. He did it about eight times. In the ninth, the referee pushed us back, and then Leonard threw a hook. He hit the referee in the eye and cut him open. The referee staggered across the ropes and pulled himself back up. He was still staggering and he said, "Keep fighting." I was looking across the ring and Leonard was looking across the ring, and then we looked at each other as if to say, "What do we do now?" They brought in one of the judges to referee the 10th round. This time, Leonard got the decision.

Leonard was in good shape that night, a lot better shape than he had been in 1973. That's one thing I like about him: He's always in shape. His weakness is that when he throws punches, he cocks them a little bit. That's why I was able to get away; I saw them coming. That's why he never hit me. He cocked every punch. His jab is real good; he doesn't cock it too much. But he tries to throw punches so fast, he almost winds up. If you watch him real close, he will telegraph a little bit.

A fast puncher can get by against him. When you see his punch coming, move and counterpunch. Hearns, however, isn't a counterpuncher. He moves in and relies on his reach.

If I fought Sugar Ray Leonard again, I'd do some things differently. I'd make him miss much more. I'd be more of a boxer, move side to side and keep the pressure on him. If you stand there, right in front of him, he looks good. But if you move backward, side to side, or in, he gets a little flustered.

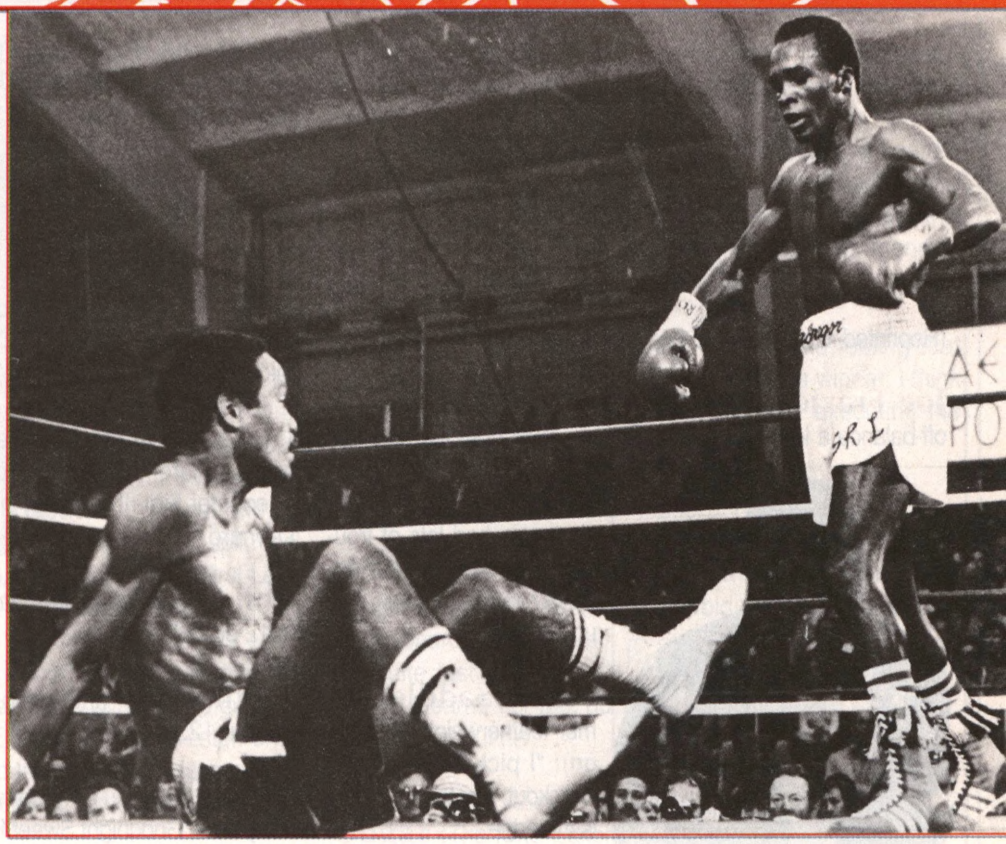
As for Thomas Hearns, I was able to get inside of his reach every time; it was just that I couldn't throw [Shields was suffering

Shields lands a right hand during his bout with Hearns. The Californian believed that the biggest advantage Hearns held over Leonard was his reach. He also agreed that The Hit Man was more skilfull than most of the big punchers he'd faced.

from an injured shoulder]. But the fact is that I got inside, and that's exactly where I wanted to be. I did it by slipping his punches, his lefts and his rights. Inside is where Leonard is going to want to be. Hearns didn't do much inside. Every punch that he threw on the inside missed. He didn't land a single punch. I saw them all coming.

He has a good right hand, a very good right hand, but it still didn't do all that much to me. You can fight a lesser fighter, some guy who's ranked 500th or something, and he might hit harder, but he doesn't have the ring experience that Hearns does. I've fought punchers with Hearns' power, but they've lacked his skills.

Hearns hits much harder than Pipino Cuevas; I'd say that for sure. As far as jabs go, Leonard's is probably a lot more effective. Hearns' jab and left hook didn't bother me at all. I would step back when he would jab, and I'd catch the very tip of his left. It would barely touch me. Hearns' big advantage is his reach. In the speed of their jabs, I'd give Leonard the edge. But the speed is comparable. In combinations, however, Leonard has the big advantage. He's smaller than Hearns, so there is a smaller distance between him and his opponent for the punches to travel.



Leonard drops Wilfred Benitez in the 15th round of their WBC welterweight title bout in 1979. Shields accurately predicted that if the Hearns fight went into the later rounds that Sugar Ray would win by knockout.

As far as Hearns' stamina, I thought he was really tired in our fight. So did my dad [Sonny Shields is Randy's manager] and my people, and a lot of the people who were just watching. They all thought he was dead tired too. If I would've been able to push him, the result might have been different. His strongest rounds are the first through the fourth or fifth. His power faded in the later rounds. I think he may train harder for Leonard because this is the fight he's been building to. He'd better. Leonard can stay strong all the way through 15 rounds.

Each fighter will try to psych the other out. I can see them squaring off in the middle of the ring and staring each other down. I think fighters do this mainly for themselves. People think it's done to psych the opponent out, and sometimes even the fighters think it will work as a psychological measure. But I don't think this type of thing ever bothers an everyday professional fighter. I think it gives a fighter a last-minute psychological edge over what he already has. It's like when football players get together in the middle of the field and start ranting and raving and hitting each other on the shoulder pads. It's to get themselves going. Both Leonard and Hearns will enter the fight thinking they have the psychological edge.

Both fighters will also try to establish their fight plan from the beginning. I don't know exactly what Leonard will do, but Hearns will try to end it right away with his right hand. If Leonard can take that punch and stay away from it, he'll be okay. Leonard will have to stay away *and* get inside.

He'll have to do both, not one or the other. He'll have to stay on his toes and move side to side. He won't want to stay in front of Hearns. Like Leonard, Hearns has his best fights when he faces a stationary target.

Hearns is going in with the big reach advantage. Leonard moves well—I don't think he's as good a defensive fighter as me—the whole thing will be whether or not he can stay away from Hearns' right in the early rounds. If he can, I think he'll take Hearns in the later rounds.

If it ends by late kayo, Leonard will be the winner. If it ends by early kayo, it will be Hearns. If it goes the distance, it could be a tossup. Leonard will be throwing more punches in the end, but Hearns will have thrown harder, and he will have been more effective at the start.

It all depends on Leonard's movement and Hearns' condition. If Leonard can move and counterpunch, he'll be all right and he'll win it. But he screwed up in the first Duran fight. Will his fight strategy somehow be thrown off, or will he fight the way he's supposed to fight? I feel Leonard will do it. ■

37 Experts *Try Their Hand At* Selecting A Winner

(Reprinted from THE RING, September 1981)

Joe Frazier (former heavyweight champion): "Hearns is off-balance a lot. He doesn't throw punches from the shoulder more than a few times a fight. He wings most of his shots. He had lots of trouble with Randy Shields. Sugar Ray will beat him up. 'Nuff said."

Smokin' Joe picked Leonard

Sandy Saddler (former featherweight champion): "I pick Hearns by a knockout. His terrific power is the edge."

Willie Pep (former featherweight champion): "Hearns has been knockin' people dead, but Randy Shields, a smart boxer, gave him lots of trouble. I think he'll have trouble with Leonard. It'll be a close fight. I won't pick any winner, but I lean toward Leonard."

Emanuel Steward (Hearns' manager-trainer): "After what I saw in Houston, Hearns wins in five."

Harold Weston Jr. (former welterweight contender and current assistant matchmaker for Madison Square Garden): "I'll give Hearns a slight edge because of his punching power."

Dick Young (Executive Sports Editor, New York *Daily News*): "Hearns!"

Bob Surkein (former president, AAU): "If Hearns is sharp, Leonard will have his hands full. For the first time, Leonard will be giving away height and punching power. The fight can go either way, depending on whose night it is. The outcome is very unpredictable."

Emile Griffith (five-time former world champion): "I like Hearns. He's tall, has the reach over Leonard, the power over Leonard, and he can also take a good punch. Hearns didn't look good against Randy Shields, but Leonard didn't look good against Larry Bonds. Hearns will do the things he has to do against Leonard to win."

Emile Griffith favored Hearns

Juan La Porte (featherweight contender): "Sugar Ray will win. He's the better fighter."

Nino Gonzales (junior middleweight contender): "I'll take Sugar Ray to stop him."

Curtis Harris (lightweight contender): "I have to go with Leonard. He has the speed to make Tommy miss and to counter him. If anybody has the tools to beat Hearns, it's Leonard."

Phil Pepe (New York *Daily News* sportswriter): "Leonard in 12 or 13."

Johnny Bos (international matchmaker): "Leonard by TKO in 12."

Sal Marchiano (sportscaster, ESPN): "There will definitely be a 'Goodnight Sweet Prince' in this one."

Tony Tucker (undefeated *Tomorrow's Champions* heavyweight): "Leonard's greater speed will cause Hearns problems. Hearns' greater height and reach will cause Leonard problems. I think Leonard will take a decision, but it should be a very close fight."

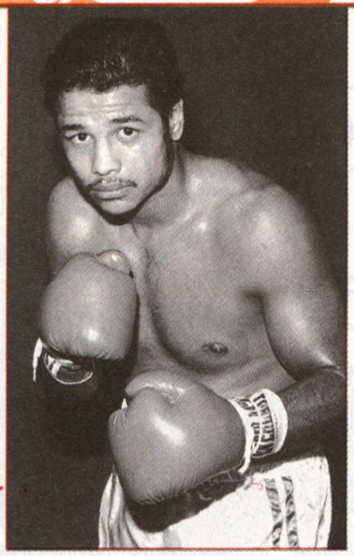
Rocky Lockridge (top-rated featherweight contender): "Leonard will win either by a decisive decision or by a late-round TKO."

Bobby Czyz (undefeated middleweight sensation): "I wouldn't bet on this fight if you gave me money. I somehow think Leonard will win, but both of these guys have the tools to emerge victorious."

Aaron Pryor (junior welterweight champion): "I've already beaten Hearns—in the amateurs—and I'd love to fight Leonard. I don't know who will win and I don't care. I just want the winner."

Milton McCrory (unbeaten Kronk welterweight contender): "Hearns by a knockout inside of five."

Saoul Mamby (WBC junior welterweight champion): "Hearns doesn't hit as hard as most people think he does. I think Duran hits harder, and Duran couldn't stop Leonard in two fights. This one will go all the way, with the late rounds being



Tony Alaya Jr. felt it was too close to call

the difference. I'll go with Hearns on a decision."

Tony Ayala Jr. (middleweight contender): "It should be a sensational fight, but I don't have any idea who will win. I think it's too close to call."

Jim Jacobs (fight film historian/manager, Wilfred Benitez): "I think that both fighters will be knocked down in this bout and the fight will go to a split decision, just like the first Leonard-Duran fight."

George Benton (veteran trainer): "I have to lean toward Leonard. Hearns seems to have trouble with evasive guys like Alfonso Hayman and Randy Shields. Harold Weston Jr., a good fighter but shorter than Leonard, also gave Hearns plenty of trouble. Leonard is a smart, polished fighter. He'll do what he has to win."

Davey Armstrong (once-beaten Kronk lightweight): "This one is too tough to call."

Steve Farhood (editor, *KO Magazine*): "Leonard will win a unanimous decision. His side-to-side movement will confuse Hearns. By the later rounds, Hearns will slow down and Leonard will be able to get inside and score heavily."

Joe DiMaggio (baseball Hall of Famer): "This is too much of a fight for me to pick. I think it'll be one of the greatest fights of all-time. All I know is I want to see it. I really want to see it."

Lou Falcigno (President Momentum Enterprises): "Sugar Ray will win the fight."

Rollie Schwartz (chief of officials, United States Amateur Boxing Federation): "I look for Leonard to win a decision, coming on very strong in the last five rounds. I have the utmost respect for Hearns and think he's extremely talented, but Leonard will be too much for him, especially in the final five rounds."

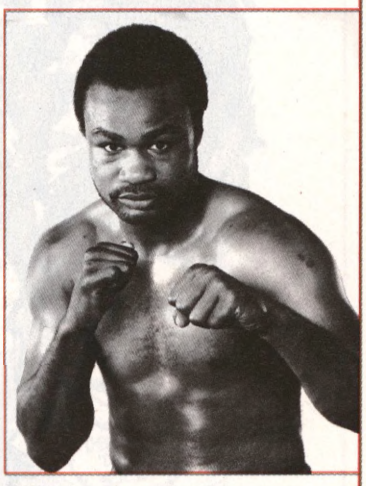
Lou Duva (fight manager): "I think this fight is a case of styles. What it comes down to is a question of whether Leonard will be able to adapt to Hearns' speed and height. If Janks Morton and Angelo Dundee can put together a battle plan that Leonard can execute properly, then this will be quite an interesting fight. The man who adapts to the other's style the best wins."

Dan Duva (promoter, "The Showdown"): "I've heard it said that no athlete is worth the money that Hearns and Leonard are being paid. I don't believe that to be true in this case. I'm sure every fan will get more than his money's worth by the time the evening is through."

Ray Arcel (veteran trainer): "I have this feeling that Hearns can win, but it's very difficult to pick a winner. I think Hearns will be able to keep Leonard from executing the things he has to do."

Sam Solomon (veteran trainer): "Hearns by kayo."

Eddie Mustafa Muhammad (WBA light heavyweight champion): "Hearns is too big and too hard a hitter for Leonard. Hearns is also quite fast and a great boxer. Hearns will win, no question about it."



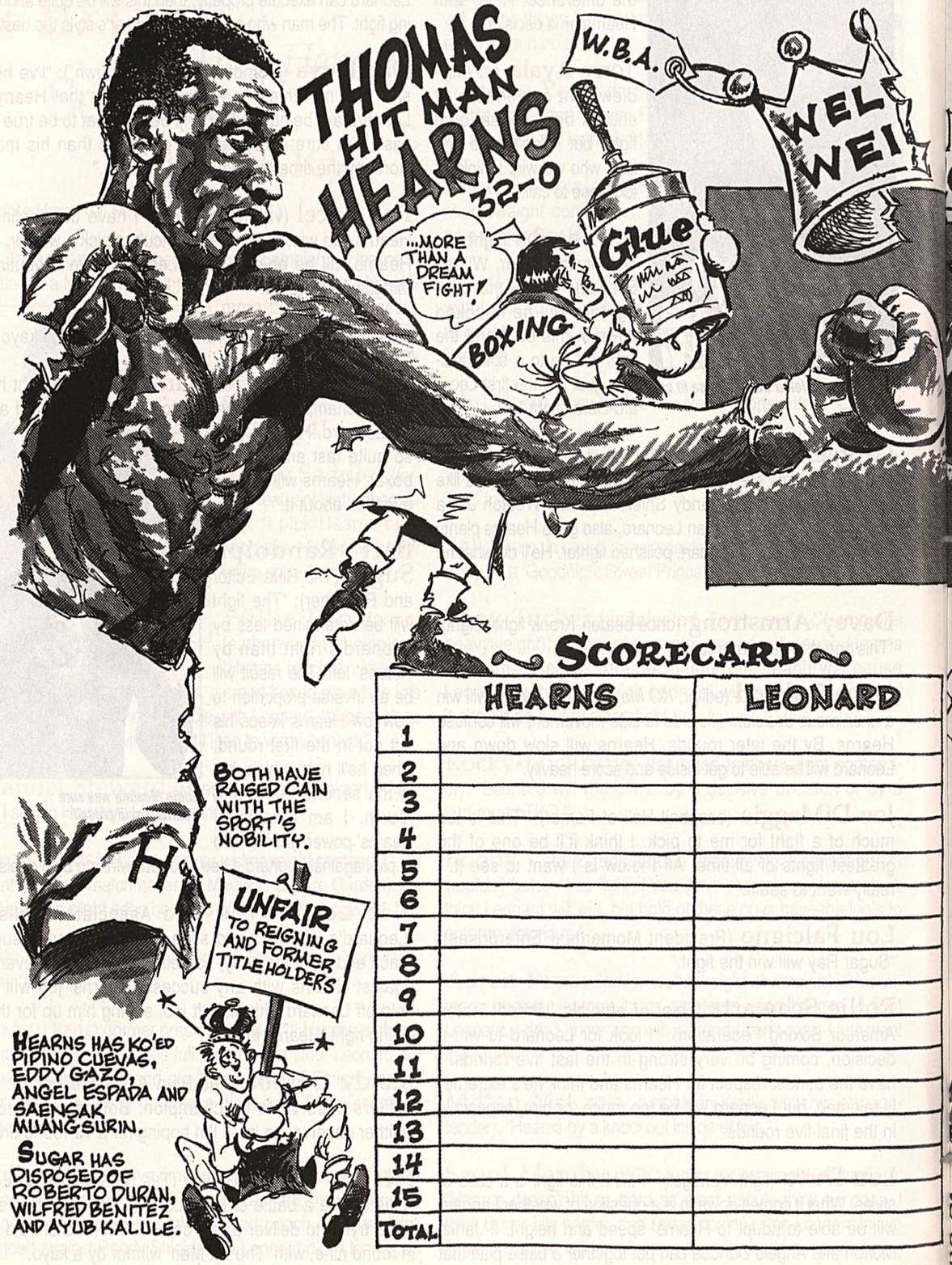
Eddie Mustafa was sure Hearns would prevail

Bert Randolph Sugar (The Ring Editor and Publisher): "The fight will be determined less by Leonard's right than by Hearns' left. The result will be an inverse proportion to how low Hearns keeps his left not in the first round, when he'll hold it high, but in the second, third, and fourth. I am in awe of Hearns' power, yet it's hard to pick against Leonard. I see Leonard winning by a decision."

Nat Loubet (The Ring Associate Publisher): "Leonard's job will be to slide in under Hearns' superior reach and work the body, something nobody has ever done against Hearns with any success. Hearns' job will be to hold off Leonard with his left jab, setting him up for the finishing right. Hearns in six."

Randy Gordon (The Ring Associate Editor): "Both fighters deserve to be champion. Both deserve to win. Neither deserves to lose. I'm hoping for a 15-round draw."

Herbert G. Goldman (The Ring Managing Editor): "This will be a battle of left jabs until Ray runs into a right while trying to deliver a fast combo. The end should come in round nine, with 'The Hit Man' winner by a kayo." ■



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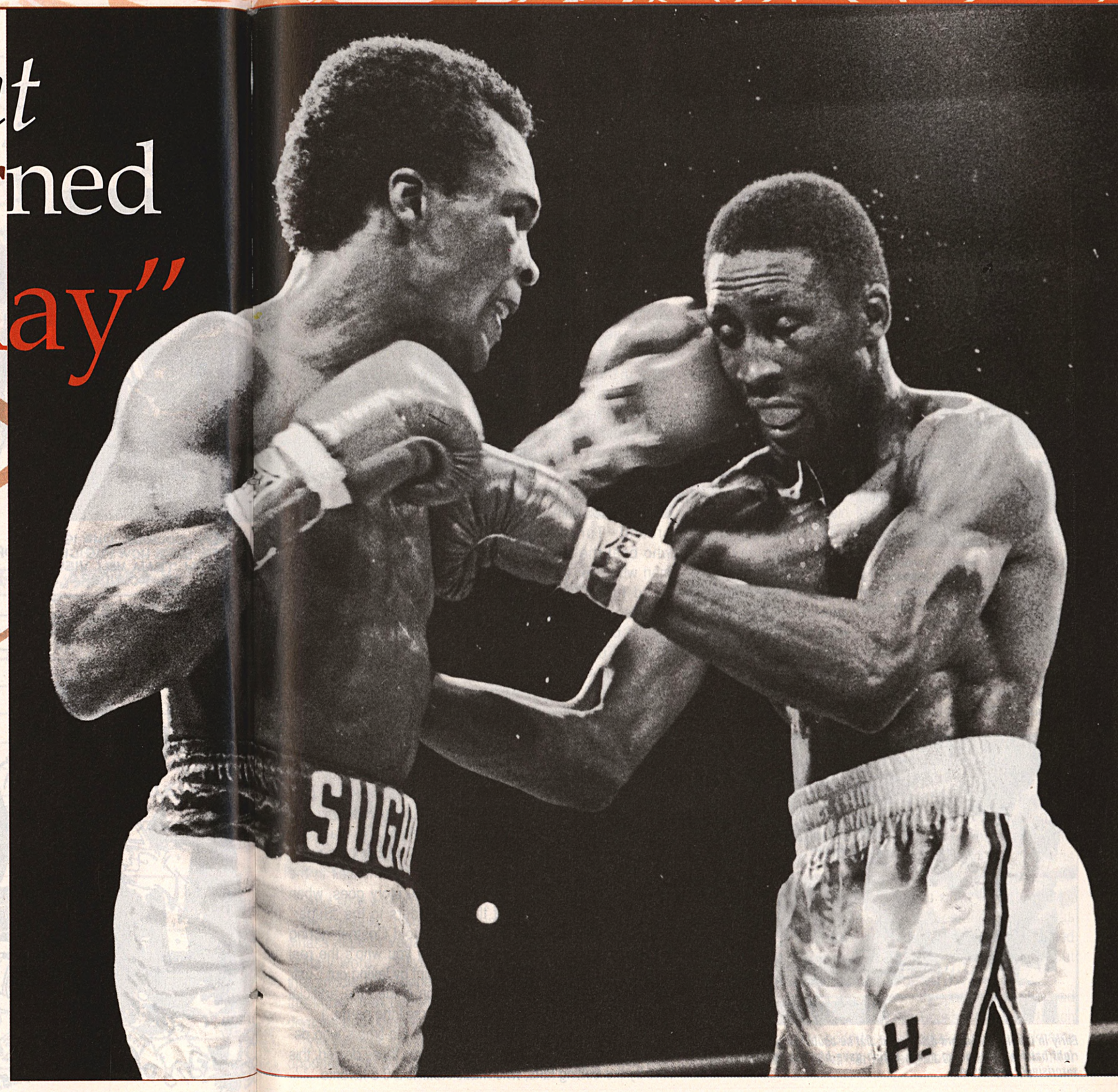
The Night Leonard Hearned The Title "Sugar Ray"

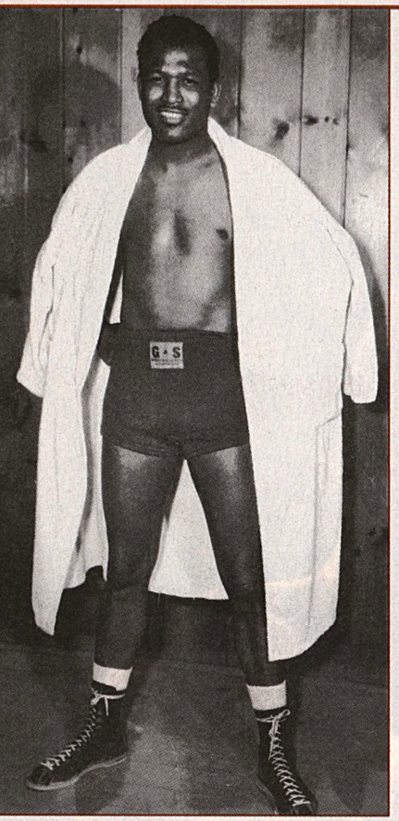


(Reprinted from *The Ring*, November 1981)

By Bert R. Sugar

That blockbuster mentality that makes every fight sound like the "Second Coming"—and has given us enough "Fights Of The Century" to take us through the era of Buck Rogers, 2400 A.D.—has now given us a lesser celestial happening called "The Showdown." But it was lesser in name only, not in magnitude.

No matter what they called the Leonard-Hearns to-do, it was one helluva fight staged in front of almost 24,000 recently released mental patients who seemed collectively dedicated to the deafening of America. And, in the end, Sugar Ray Leonard acquitted the hype by soundly thrashing the supposedly invincible Thomas Hearns in a fight with more twists and turns than could be found in an early O. Henry potboiler, thereby laying claim to the undisputed welterweight championship of the world. As well as to a place amongst the all-time greats.



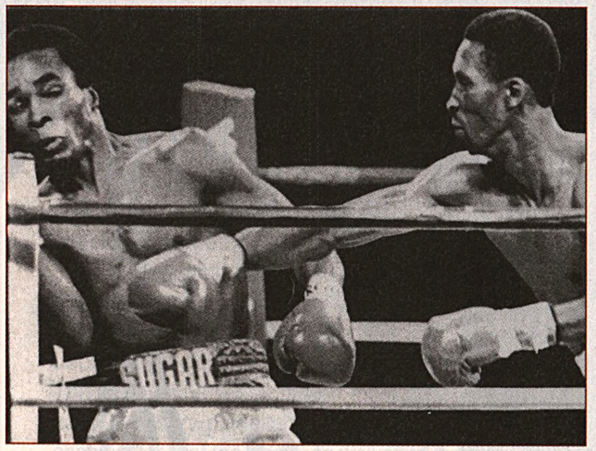
Besides beating Hearns, Leonard also wanted to prove worthy of his nickname. For many fans and much of the media, Sugar Ray Robinson (above) was the only fighter worthy of the "Sugar" moniker.

But Leonard won more than just the fight. He won what Rodney Dangerfield—for lack of a more descriptive phrase—would call "respect." Not only from his hard-hitting opponent, but from the hardboiled sportswriters as well, many of who had discounted Leonard's stock, belittling his accomplishments as part of a media build-up.

For ever since Leonard exploded on the media scene and on the national screen he has been regarded by many of the doubting Thomases, Jims, and Larrys as a media phenomenon.

Maybe it was Howard Cosell, who had hitched his braggin' to a star that was the reason for the press' downplaying of Ray's abilities. But Howie knows a winner when he sees one, and Ray always had the makings of one. "Forget it!" said the rest of the media, who continued to view Leonard merely as the greatest boxer ever to come out of Palmer Park, Maryland. Nothing more. Most of the boxing writers could never bring themselves to acknowledge that Leonard was as good as he was because that other unspeakable medium, TV, found him first.

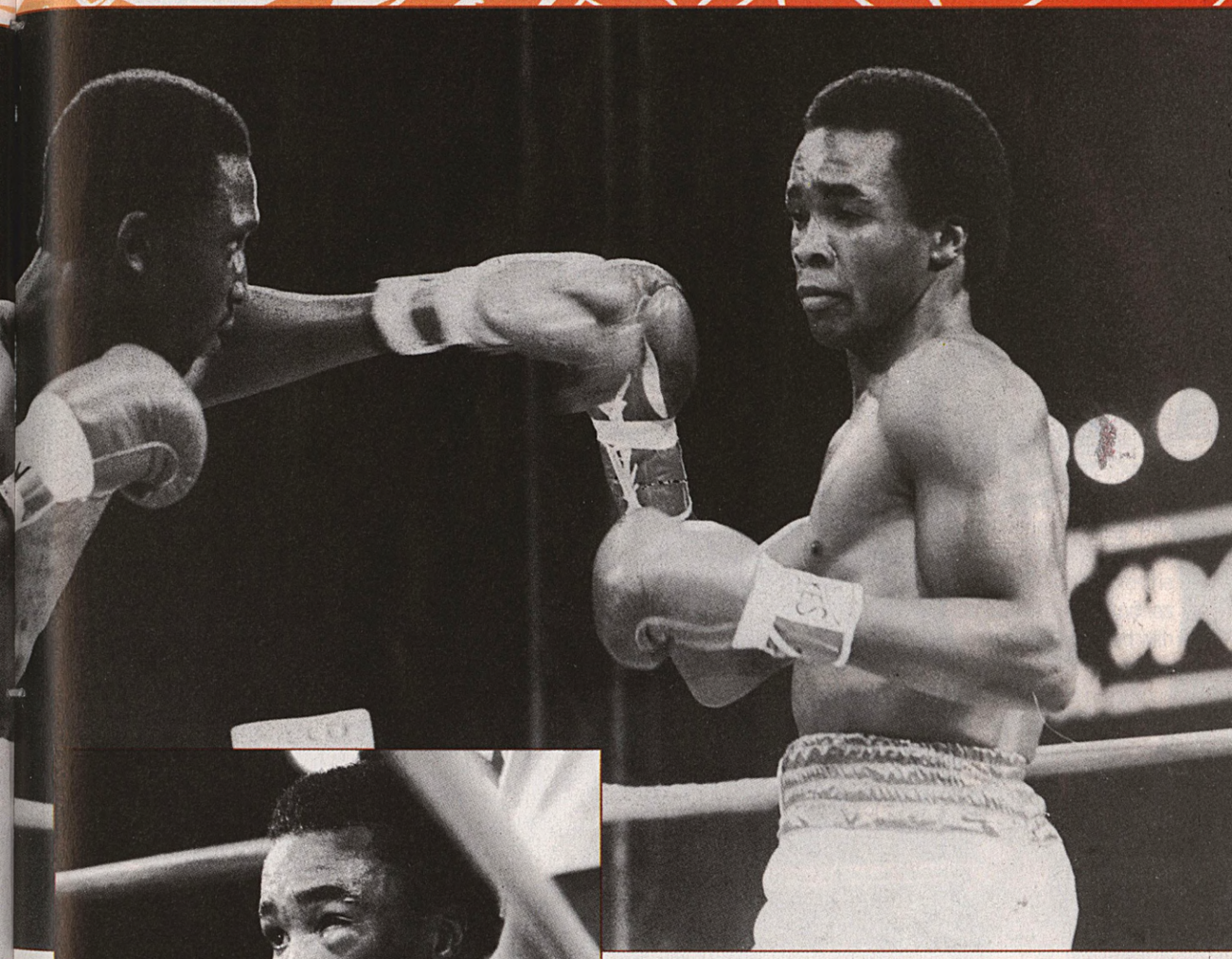
Or maybe it was the fact that Leonard was denied the ultimate satisfaction of destroying the man who had beaten him previously and which had served as the anchor of so many other legends—Robinson, who turned the tables on LaMotta, Turpin, and Basilio; Ali, who came back to "whup" Frazier twice; Louis, who destroyed Schmeling the second time around; Tunney, who beat the only man who ever bettered him, Greb; and Dempsey, who almost came back to beat Tunney in "The Battle Of The Long Count." The centerpiece for each and every one of these ring worthies had been their comeback win over the man who had previously bedeviled them. All Leonard was remembered for was a desultory wave of a hand and the cry "No mas, No mas." Of such things are legends unmade.



Early in the fight, Leonard discovered that he could take Hearns' vaunted right hand without going down, which gave him the confidence to be surprisingly aggressive.

Moreover, according to many old-timers, for whom boxing goes in one era and out the other, there was only one "Sugar" and that accolade was reserved for one man, and one man alone—Ray Robinson. (In fact, Robinson himself had tried to preserve that title of respect for himself in the face of other "Sugars." One time, so the story goes, when Robinson faced another of the pretenders to the "Sugar" crown, George Costner, he reputedly told Costner during the prefight instructions, "Now I'll show you who's the real Sugar," and proceeded to prove his point by laying out Costner in one round. Afterward, Robinson chided the artificial "Sugar" with "Now go out and earn yourself the name.")

But it was not only the press and the old-timers who denied Ray Leonard his rightful place. He was thrice denied, this time by the betting fans, who made Hearns a 6-5 favorite.



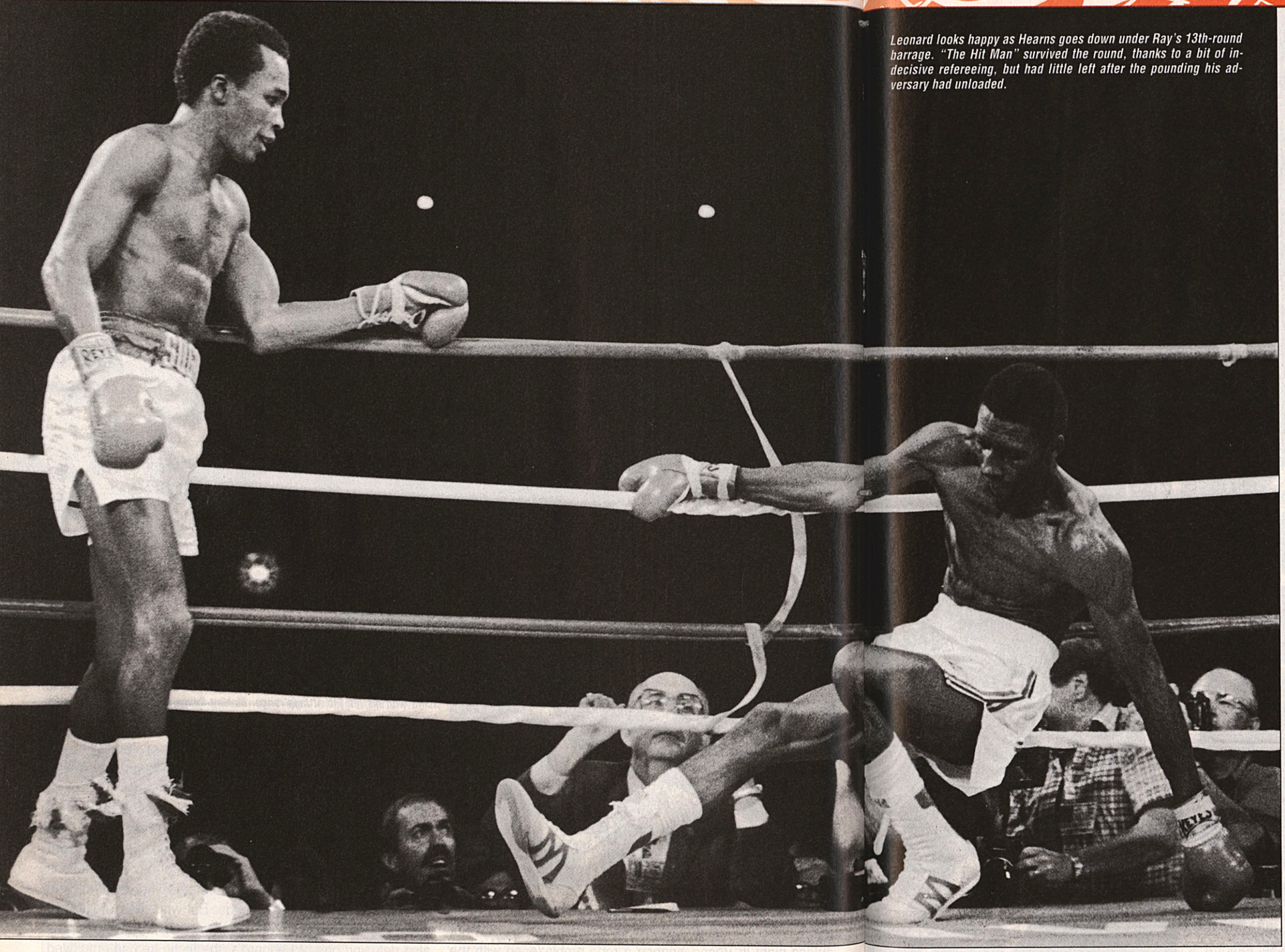
After getting stung early and falling behind, Hearns turned boxer and began to score with his left jab at long range. Making things even more miserable for Leonard was a swollen left eye that grew worse as Hearns' jabs peppered it.

And so it was that Leonard, seeking to rid himself of so many Dybbuks, came into an inferno called a ring that hot airless night in Vegas wearing a robe emblazoned with the solitary word, "Deliverance." It was an eloquent message that should have tipped off those who were supposedly "in the know" that Leonard was driven to exorcise the many demons that possessed him.

Yet the task facing Leonard was monumental. As was his opponent, the 6'1"-going-on-6'1½" Hearns, a legitimate welterweight with a heavyweight wingspan of 78 inches—at least four inches longer than that of Leonard and longer still than many heavyweight champions.

It was that reach, or so the reasoning went, that would allow Hearns to hold Leonard at bay, much as he had the hapless Pipino Cuevas, while setting up *his* lethal right hand. Hearns, however, was disabused of any such notions as Leonard slapped away his tentacle-like left time and again during the first two rounds. But while one of Hearns' favorite ploys was being negated by Leonard, Hearns was also defusing one of Leonard's, the tactic he had employed so successfully in the New Orleans fiasco—freaking out Duran with his mugging act.

For the first two rounds, the two gladiators, who had apparently studied each other's playbooks, played with each other. Hearns, who chose to be introduced by the nickname "The Motor City Cobra," in preference to his more familiar



Leonard looks happy as Hearns goes down under Ray's 13th-round barrage. "The Hit Man" survived the round, thanks to a bit of indecisive refereeing, but had little left after the pounding his adversary had unloaded.

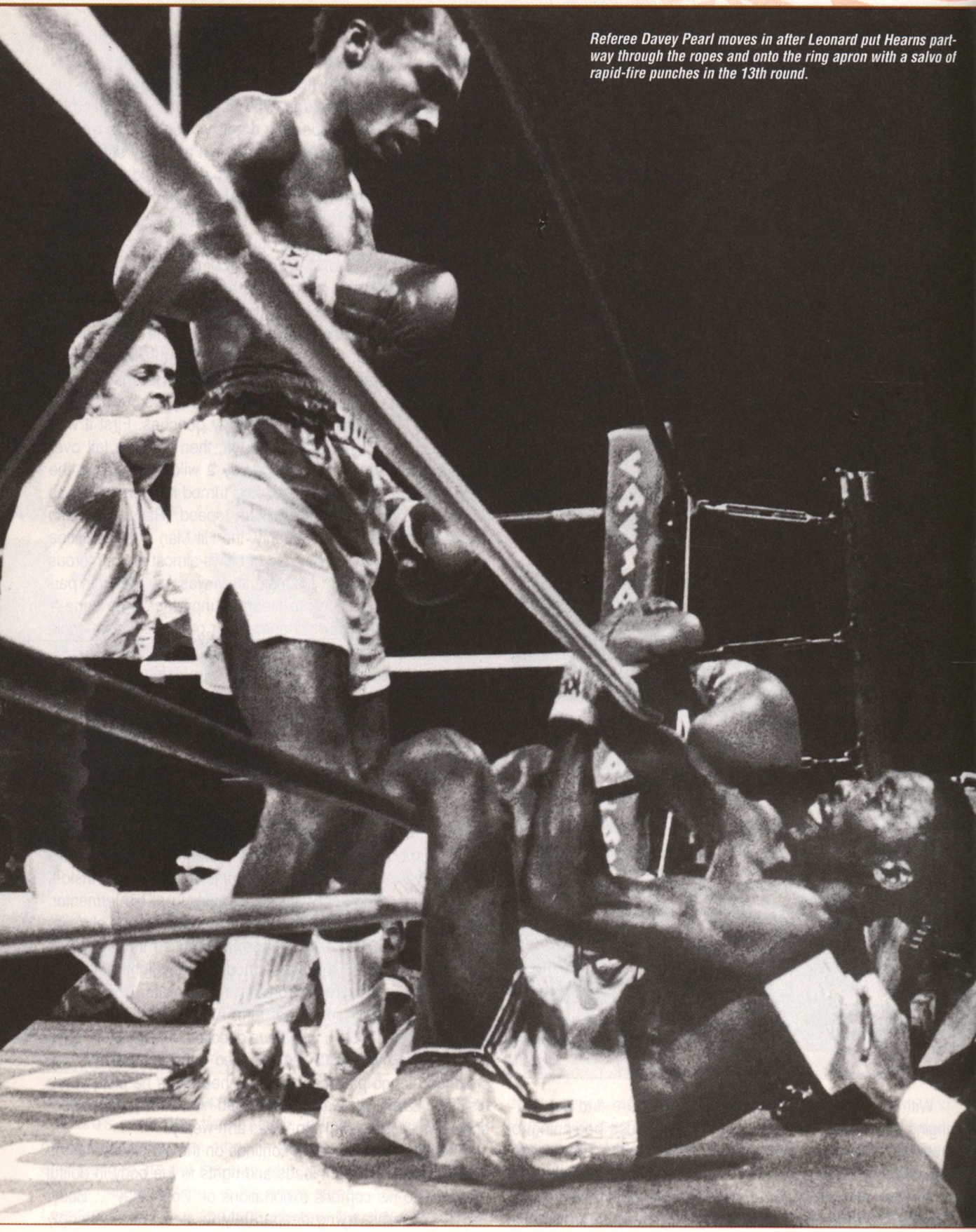
moniker of "Hit Man," acted more like a cobra than a hitman. Leonard's game plan was to circle the stationary cobra, first one way and then the other, in the manner of a mongoose, attempting to tire out the man who had gone more than four rounds only eight times in his entire career. And so it went, Leonard darting back and forth, his eyes transfixed in a fierce determination not to blink, almost as if held by toothpicks, and Hearns resorting to long left jabs and an occasionally head-hunting right, most of which Ray avoided by pulling his head back, Ali-style. The closest Hearns came to his tormentor was after the bell, when Leonard gave him a love-tap-cum-punch and Hearns clobbered him without turning the other cheek.

With Angelo Dundee's words "Go out there and get him" ringing in his ears and a freshly minted mouse beginning to erupt just under his left eye, Leonard went out in the third to take the fight to Hearns. The first thing he took was a right to the jaw. And, surprise of surprises, he didn't even blink. Now he knew he could catch anything Hearns threw. The insight was heady as Leonard stood his ground and swapped shots with Hearns, who was fighting in one-punch combinations. For the first time, Leonard scored with his right and backed up Hearns, who, momentarily confused by Leonard's quick hand speed and agility, went on the retreat. At the bell, Leonard raised his hands in a victory salute. He now knew he *would* win, not merely that he could.

Rounds four and five mirrored the first two—sandwiched around Leonard's third—with Hearns pecking away at Leonard's angry-looking eye. But even in the face of Hearns' rapier-like left, Leonard was quietly moving inside with shots to the body. And to the head when he could reach the lanky WBA champion. Still, they were rounds for Hearns. Barely. But round six was to change the complexion of the fight. For the first time, Leonard, having taken control of the fight despite Hearns' elongated left, was now crowding Hearns. Moving inside. And, what's more, beating Hearns to the punch. More correctly stated, beating him to many punches. First it was Leonard's right over Hearns' low left; then it was a left over Hearns' equally low right. Suddenly a wild left hook to the head caught Hearns' attention. And turned his head. And, as Ray's corner screamed "Speed, Ray, speed," Ray obliged with a rat-a-tat-tat staccato. Suddenly, the Hit Man was the Hittee Man, wobbling under a barrage of blows almost too numerous to count. But numbered amongst them was one punch in particular—a hard left hook to Hearns' unprotected rib cage—which caused the cobra to grimace in pain. Its effects could not be appreciated then—one of a rapid-fire series of blows, as incapable of being severed from the remainder as one pearl from a string of pearls—but one whose effects would be telling on Hearns. And, on the outcome of the fight.

Round seven saw Leonard pick up right where he had left off, rattling more left hooks off Hearns' jaw than The Hit Man had experienced in his previous 32 fights. Time and again Leonard was to penetrate the would-be defenses of his spindly opponent, landing left hooks from in close as the crowd picked up the chant "Leon-nard, Leo-nard ..." Hearns, unable to stave off the swarming Leonard and unable to tie him up inside, merely grappled to keep him away, pushing at his tormentor. And yet, as Hearns began to take on the appearance of a pinball, ricocheting from pillar to rope, he evinced that intangible known as "courage," a rare commodity in any fighter and one that separates the greats from the near-greats. It worked to keep his unsteady pins under him. At the end of the round, Hearns staggered off in the vague direction of his corner, much the worse for wear. But Leonard also looked weary from his prolonged fungo practice, breathing heavily as he plopped on his stool. Later, Ray was to say, "I had him, but he didn't cooperate," which translated into "I was arm-weary."

The eighth saw Leonard continue on the attack even as he wound down, with right leads and rights to the body in dutiful response to his corner's exhortations of "Body, Ray ... Body, Ray ..." Hearns, trying desperately to stem the seemingly



Referee Davey Pearl moves in after Leonard put Hearns partway through the ropes and onto the ring apron with a salvo of rapid-fire punches in the 13th round.

inexorable tide that was all Leonard, attempted to catch Ray with a right. But, as the round came to a close with Leonard swarming in, he took off on his bicycle, throwing out his long left in a getaway manner. However, just as the fight had turned once, it was soon to turn again, like a wheel within a wheel. For, beginning with the bell for the ninth, Thomas Hearns reverted to the style that had seen him win 163 amateur fights, only 11 by knockout. Gone was the attempt to gain leverage by leaning in; gone was the low-held left; and gone was the menacing Hit Man who instilled fear in the 32 opponents he had faced up to now. But gone too was the stationary target Ray had found so inviting. And, in its place, there suddenly appeared a masterful boxer, one who could finally take advantage of his 78-inch reach. It was the most startling role reversal since Edward G. Robinson played the leading man in *Woman In The Window*. The puncher had turned boxer and the boxer had turned puncher. And the puncher-boxer was clearly outpointing his supposedly faster opponent.

So it went through rounds nine, 10, and 11, with enough rights thrown to count on your right thumb. Hearns clearly dominating the action—what little there was of it as the high rollers began clapping and whistling for more action—and the fight. But he was always just one punch away from "Queer Street," the street he had come down before, the pavement barely beneath his feet. But Hearns' befogged condition was not apparent. Not apparent to anyone, that is, except trainer-manager Emanuel Steward, who spent his time between rounds doing anything and everything he could to snap Tommy out of his severe case of mal-de-ring—up to, and including, shouting at his charge, "If you're not goin' to fight, damn it, I'm goin' to stop it!" Somehow, Steward's shock treatment worked and Hearns came back. Strong. So, too, did his followers, and by round 12, they had worked themselves up into a frenzy, with Hearns himself leading their vocal exhortations as their hopes took flight and form in ram lefts and rights to the body. It was Hearns' round. And his last hurrah, something even Hearns might have seen, once throwing a right-hand haymaker at the half-blinded WBC champion who somehow, someway, pulled his head back at the last instant.

Round 13, incredibly, saw still another turn in the tide of battle. Up off his stool came Ray, first pushing Hearns to the canvas as their legs entwined, then punishing Hearns with a right over a left and three left hooks to the head. Hearns tried mightily to hold Leonard off, unsure of how to clinch. He tried to throw a right, but Leonard beat Hearns to the punch, catching him and jarring him off-balance. Another left by Ray, still another, and a third, and suddenly Hearns was careening about the ring, his head rolling like a rag doll's, his motions uncoordinated. Leonard was atop Hearns as Hearns first leaned, then fell, into the ropes from a series of punches fired off too rapidly to count. Suffice it to say it was "Enough," as writer Vic Ziegel noted.

Finally, after a fusillade of rights, the lanky Hearns, in his best imitation of an accordion, gently folded through the ropes. Referee Davey Pearl, who had ignored an obvious knockdown in the Holmes-Shavers fight, deemed Hearns' exit from the ring more a fall than a knockdown—although they looked as if they were part of the same cause-and-effect—and told Hearns to "get up." As Hearns slowly reclaimed his feet and recollected his mind, trainer Angelo Dundee was up on the ring apron screaming "Bulls___." Pearl motioned him down to his corner and looked back to find Leonard raking Hearns with another volley of punches, seemingly fired in a desire to prove something to somebody. This time he proved to Pearl that the Thomas Hearns leaning against the ropes on his haunches was knocked down by the collective force of his punches. Pearl took up the count while Hearns tried to haul himself up to his 6'1" height, no easy chore and one that had the appearance of a balloon slowly inflating. Finally, Prometheus was unbound and Hearns was up, albeit unsteadily, as the count reached nine, just at the bell.

There seemed to be no doubt of the outcome now. At least not to 23,615 fans seated in the makeshift arena atop the tennis courts behind Caesars Palace. But three judges, who undoubtedly had been watching tennis instead of boxing, still had Hearns ahead. Leonard was to make sure that there would be no disputed verdict; he wanted the undisputed welterweight title and went out to do it himself. He leaped off his stool at the bell for the 13th round—the longest Hearns had ever gone in a fight—and went right at Hearns, throwing rights and lefts as Hearns tried to avert them by twisting his body back and forth from a right-handed stance to a southpaw style.

It was all to no avail, as Leonard kept coming, throwing lefts to the body that made the exhausted Hearns wince and lefts to the head which made him blink. Finally, Leonard landed his Mary Ann, a straight right to the chops, and threw up his hands in his traditional victory signal. But, miracle of miracles, Hearns wouldn't, or couldn't fall, and pitched backward into the ropes. Leonard wouldn't let him off the hook now, and—between waving furiously to referee Pearl to stop the fight—raked Hearns with right uppercuts, left hooks, and hard rights. Still, Hearns wouldn't go down. But even if Hearns hadn't had enough, Pearl had and pulled Leonard away as Hearns looked in the direction of the referee as if to quizzically ask "Wha' happened?" and then reeled off in the direction of his corner, the former WBA welterweight champion of the world, at 1:45 of the 14th round.

At the press conference the next day, with other fighters sporting dark glasses and looking like Elwood and Jake Blues, Thomas Hearns was to show his respect for the "new champion, Sugar Ray Leonard ..." It was along time coming, but maybe, just maybe, Sugar Ray Leonard will get the respect he deserves. And, yes, Virginia—and Maryland, and all points north, west, and south—there is a new "Sugar Ray." ■

Leonard-Hearns Revisited

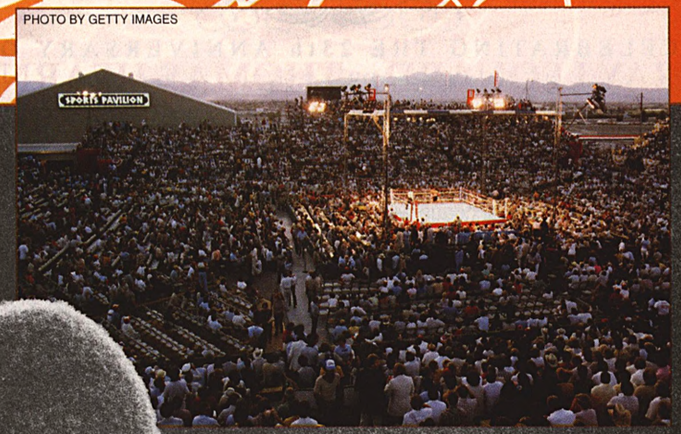
We Still Can't Forget What Happened

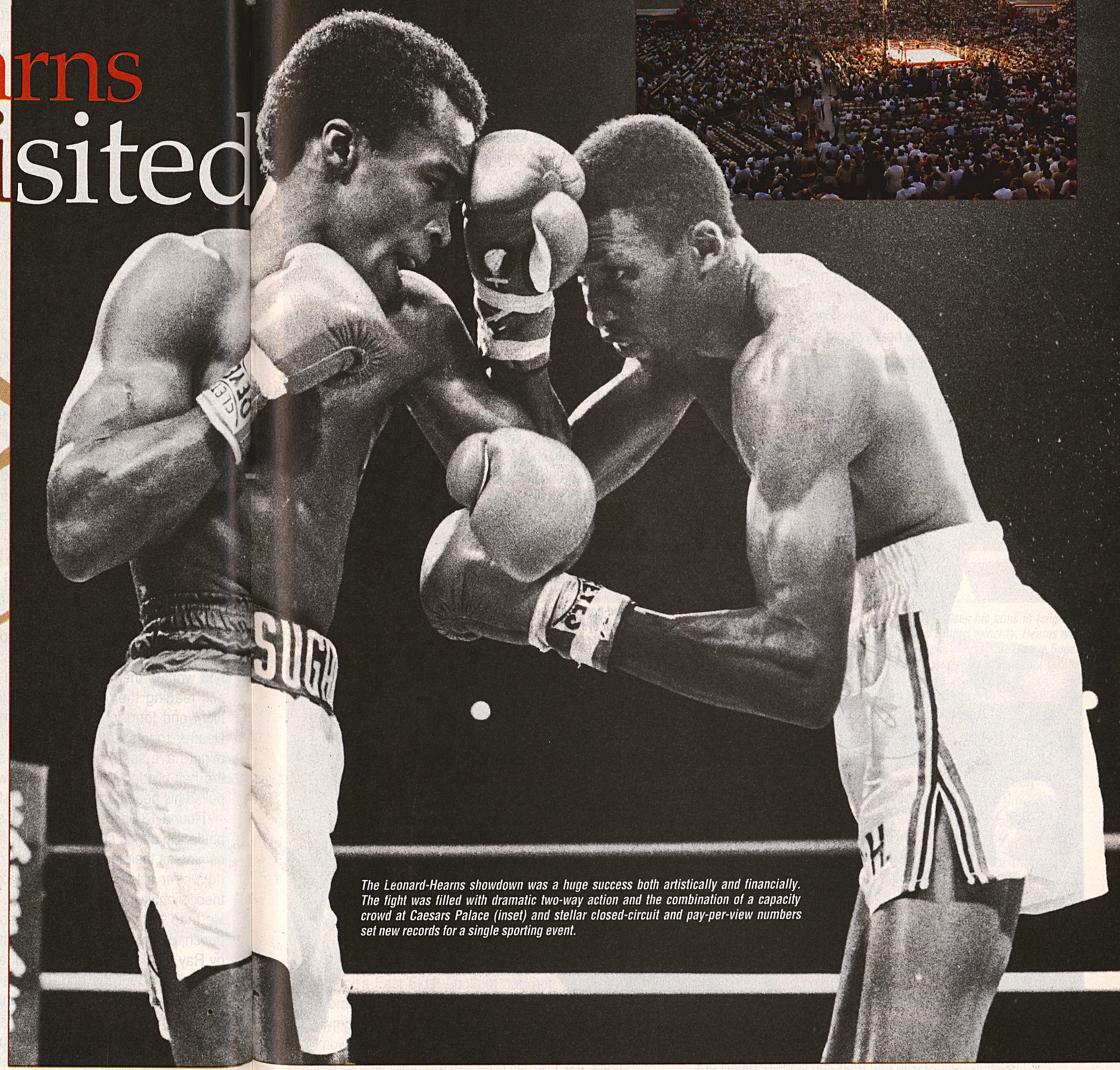
By William Dettloff

All of us who live and breathe have events happen in our lives that for reasons good or bad stay with us until the end. Inevitably, they are tethered to cultural landmarks that give the memory shape and color. You can't parse out an event from its context any more than you can remove the trunk from a tree and expect it to remain upright. You can try to look back in a vacuum, but the culture around it comes flooding back before you can stop it and soon you can feel it, get the taste of it even, and it's up to you whether or not you want to stay for a visit.

It works the other way too. Escape into an era gone by, just in generalities, just in shadow and texture, and, sooner or later, detail and events that marked that time for you will come rushing back into focus. For a generation of fight fans, the first Sugar Ray Leonard-Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns fight remains a cultural lamppost. Today, it can be seen too as a window to a night when the fight game shone, and, at the same time, as an event that helped usher in a new technology about whose benefits we remain ambivalent.

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES





The Leonard-Hearns showdown was a huge success both artistically and financially. The fight was filled with dramatic two-way action and the combination of a capacity crowd at Caesars Palace (inset) and stellar closed-circuit and pay-per-view numbers set new records for a single sporting event.

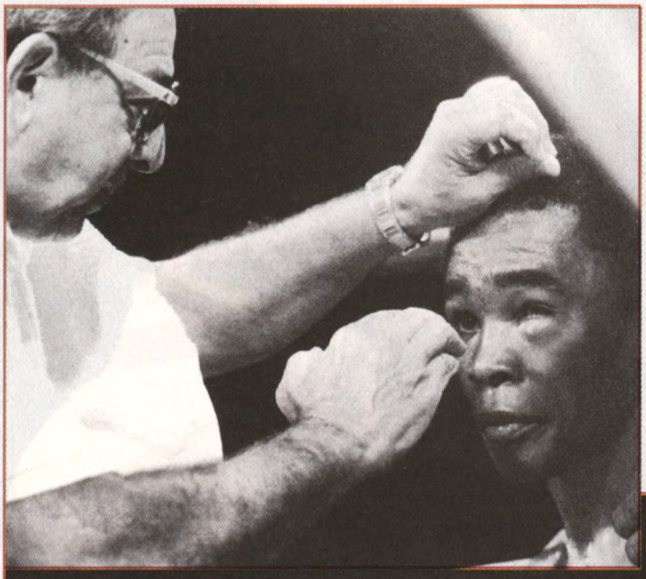
Leonard's 14th-round stoppage of Hearns on September 16, 1981, in Las Vegas was just a prizefight to be sure, and no amount of flowery language will make it more than that. No one will try to convince you that it rivaled in scope or importance to other, weightier matters of the day, such as the confirmation of Sandra Day O'Connor to the United States Supreme Court, or the death of civil rights leader Roy Wilkins, events that took place within days of the bout. Indeed, in terms of its impact on American popular culture, it is dwarfed in retrospect by the debut a month prior of MTV, the weight of whose introduction to the world of such innovations as Parachute Pants, black leather ties, and mullets, can never be overstated.

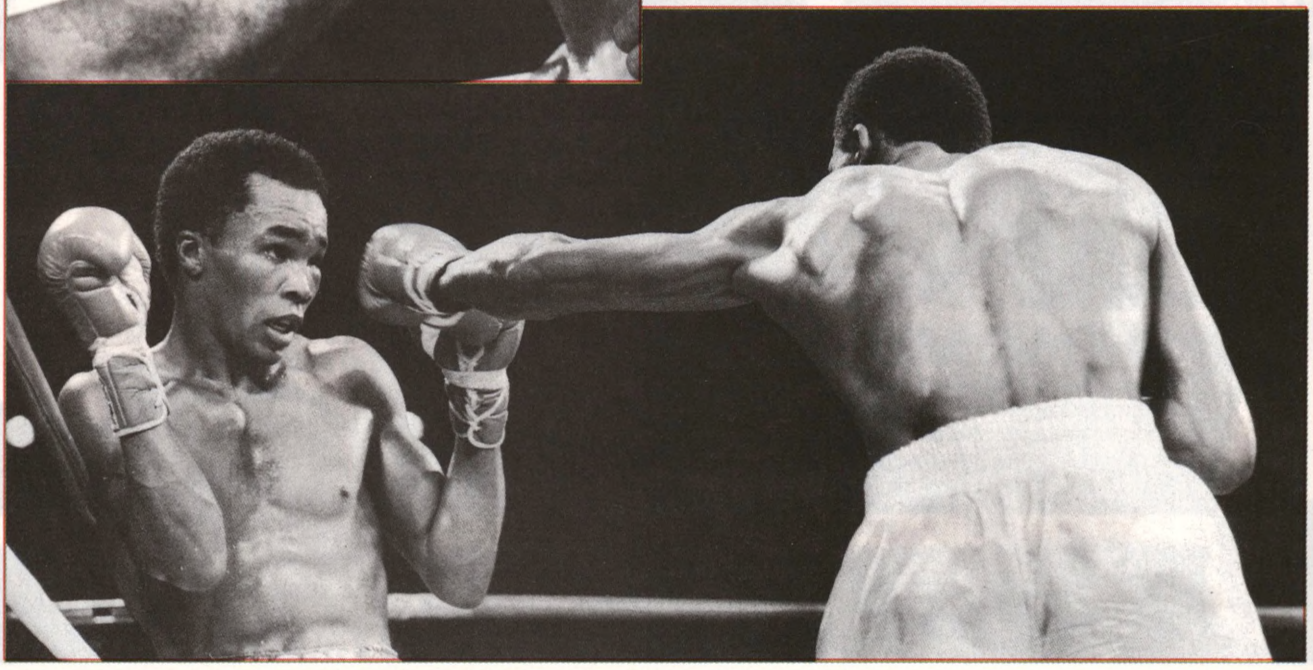
Still, in the fight business, it didn't get any better than Leonard-Hearns. It wasn't just that you had two of the sport's biggest stars going against one another, and the two best guys at their weight, and two reigning titleholders. It was the sport's very biggest star, not even a heavyweight if you could believe it, all smiles and commercial endorsements outside the ring and a stone killer inside, seeking to legitimize himself as a fighter, to answer once and for all whether he had, as Dave Anderson of *The New York Times* put it, "the soul of a gladiator."

That Leonard ultimately triumphed through a badly swollen left eye, a deficit on the scorecards, and Hearns' ghoulish height and reach advantages told us what we needed to know about his inner workings. But somehow that made him at once more likable and detestable. Who could resist the charms of this boyish man-killer who fought with such cunning passion one minute and the next, with seven-year-old "Little Ray" at his side, make us yearn happily for a cool, refreshing 7-Up? Yet you could see something of a snob in him too, arrogance that was unattractive in someone so otherwise perfect.

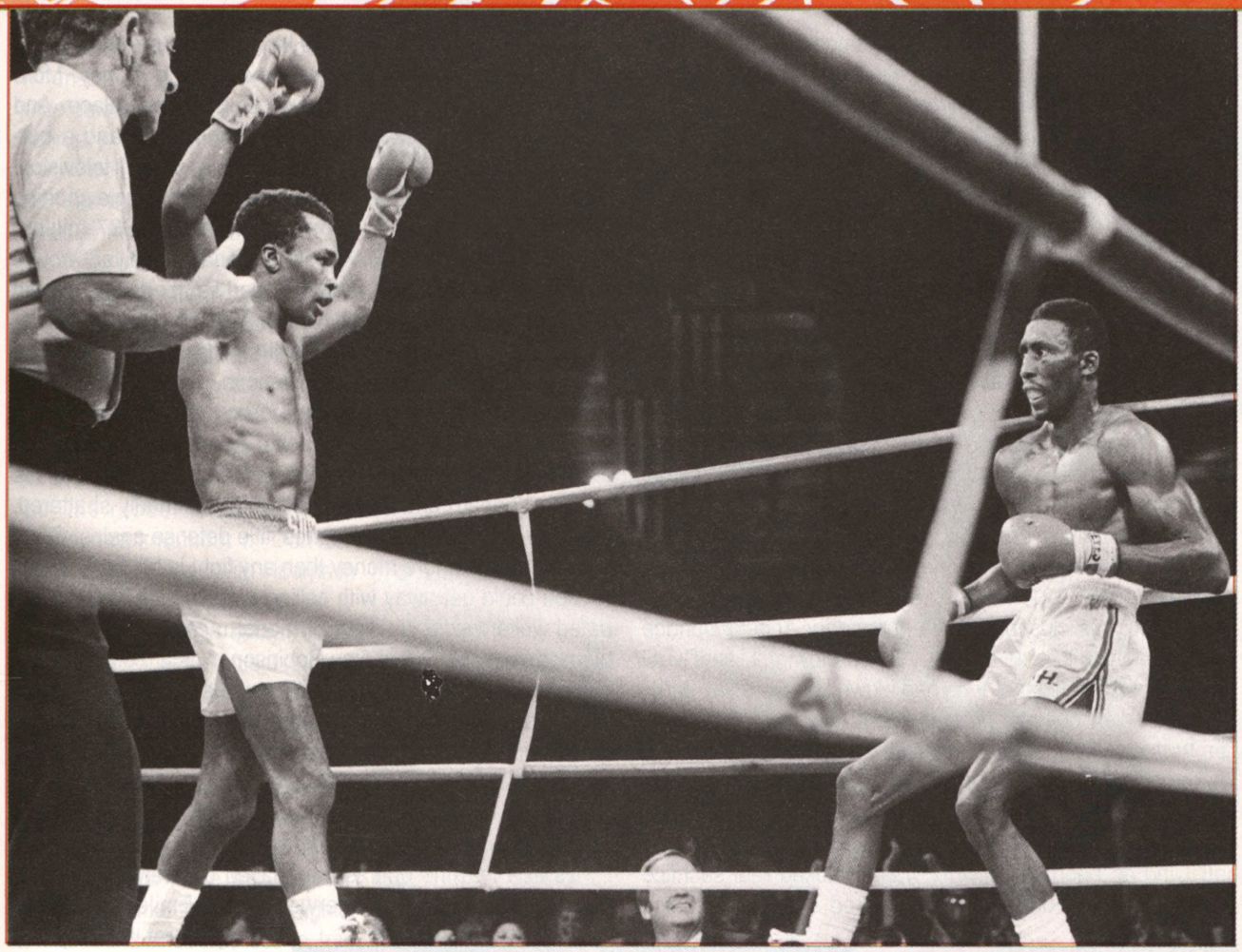
Hearns, for his part, went into it with no such dichotomy. There was some mystery about him, yes, but it didn't involve dueling perfection. The relevant facts known about him appeared all there was to be known: He had a tremendous capacity for knocking men unconscious. He could box when he had to. Opponents feared him like they did the man he destroyed, the great Mexican puncher Pipino Cuevas. In truth, Hearns was even more frightening, for the first right he landed on poor Cuevas' jaw on the way to the second-round knockout petrified even Cuevas, who never recovered.

It seems trite and simplistic, even downright silly now, but, to many, Leonard's win was a vindication of good over evil, the script upon which all good wars and plays are waged. It was the same with his rematch victory over Roberto Duran a year prior, when his speed and antics made Duran, the long-established





Hearns turned boxer (below) to build a lead on the scorecards and jab shut Leonard's right eye (left). Had Sugar Ray scored an easy victory, it's doubtful the bout would have been so memorable.



villain in their soap opera, quit in piqued frustration. To most, Leonard was always the good guy, always the fighter in the white hat on the white stallion protecting the women and children from a less civilized, less trustworthy, less shaven, and less appealing villain.

Leonard was marketed brilliantly, largely by advisor Mike Trainer, but also by Howard Cosell, who smartly seized upon him during the 1976 Olympics. Cosell had a good eye for stars and good stories, and Leonard had the story, the charisma, and fighting skill to go a long way. He made $40,000 for his pro debut, a record at the time. He had all the attention, adoration, and orthodontia on the way up to hit that magical sphere of which most fighters may only dream—that commercial recognition outside the fight community. He did, indeed, transcend the sport and that permitted him to remain untethered to promoters, an independence virtually unheard of in the fight game.

Hearns' story was far less glamorous and far more realistic and representative of a real fighter. He'd come from a real inner city, Detroit's East Side. Leonard had not. He visited the old neighborhoods all the time. Leonard didn't. He didn't make it to the Olympics, wasn't an object of Cosell's odd affections, and you know he didn't make anything close to $40,000 when he stopped Jerome Hill in two rounds in his 1977 pro debut.

After staggering Hearns into the ropes, Leonard raises his arms in (slightly) premature victory. In fact, although he was in a distinct minority, Hearns was never happy with referee Davey Pearl's 14th-round stoppage that gave Sugar Ray the victory and sole ownership of the welterweight championship.

Early on, Hearns suffered the results of bad advice from those around him. He courted the "Hit Man" imagery and was sullen with the press. He engaged in such nonsense as throwing a rubber chicken at Leonard during the postfight press conference following Leonard's win over Duran, while loudly calling him "Chicken Ray." He ditched all that by the time he got Leonard in the ring, but it was too late and probably wouldn't have mattered anyway; Leonard was going to be the good guy regardless of anything Hearns did or didn't do or throw, and there was no way around it. Charisma conquers all.

Aside from all the metaphors and symbolic importance around the fight as an event, its core attractiveness lies in the talents of its combatants and how they would play out in the ring. Leonard opened as an 8-5 favorite, due mainly to his headier resume: He'd beaten Duran and the great Wilfred Benitez, junior middleweight titlist Ayub Kalule, and a host of hard-scrabble if carefully selected contenders on the way up. Hearns' most credentialed victims were Cuevas and veterans Angel Espada and Randy Shields (Leonard had also beaten Shields).

As the fight approached, however, the odds evened out. Two weeks out, they plummeted to 6-5 pick-'em, a development some attributed to the combination of the way Hearns was destroying sparring partners in open workouts and the endless playing in the local casino of his win over Cuevas. By the day before, late money from Detroit had pushed the odds to 7-5 in Hearns' favor, a five-point swing in just a few weeks.

Today, most recollections center on the seeming role reversal that occurred at almost the fight's midway point: Leonard hurting Hearns badly in the sixth—from that point forward, assuming the role of puncher—while Hearns outboxed Leonard from distance. In truth, they both were reverting to old form. Leonard told reporters in the days leading up to the fight that he'd fought for a while in the amateurs like Joe Frazier—straight ahead and looking for the knockout. Hearns, of course, had been a master boxer as an amateur, scoring just 11 knockouts in 168 wins.

The precise nature of Leonard's win—that he was down by scores of 125-121, 125-122, and 124-121 at the end, that his left eye was closed, that the legendary Angelo Dundee had to holler at him, famously, "You're blowin' it, son!"—all add to Leonard's legend. If he had blown Hearns away early, had lost to him outright, or even lost to him by a close margin, thus spawning what would almost assuredly have been an immediate rematch, his legend and legacy would be incomplete. Duran had robbed him of the opportunity to display his gladiator's soul in their rematch. As complete and satisfying as Leonard's victory was, it lacked real sacrifice and pathos on Leonard's part. It lacked a comeback. The struggle with Hearns, exactly as it played out, provided it.

Here's what else it provided—money. Big money. More than 24,000 fans were at a sold out Caesars Palace. And thanks mostly to closed-circuit television sales and a burgeoning medium at the time called "pay-for-view" television, the event was, at that point in time, the richest single sporting event in history, with a gross of more than $37-million. Hearns took home $4-million of it. Leonard received around $12-million, breaking the record he had set for dollars earned for a single sporting event in his first fight with Duran.

Leonard-Hearns marked the first aggressive marketing and use of pay television, where consumers could buy the event and watch it in their living rooms. It did big numbers. The cat was out of the bag, never to return. And with the technology now a known force, it wasn't long before the records Leonard and Hearns set were summarily shattered. The very next year, Larry Holmes' title defense against Gerry Cooney earned more money than any fight in history.

You could get away with calling it maybe the most anticipated welterweight title fight of modern times. The division's biggest star ever, Sugar Ray Robinson, was a monster at the gate, but he was so good at 147 pounds that victories were very nearly foregone conclusions. (His defense against Kid Gavilan in '48 might be the exception). It wasn't until he got older and moved up to middleweight, where he was more vulnerable to Gene Fullmer and Carmen Basilio, that any real drama existed the way it did with Leonard-Hearns.

It's true that the operas that played out between Johnny Saxton and Basilio at welterweight and Emile Griffith and Benny Paret a few years later were huge events for the sport. What they lacked was the participation of two of the best fighters in the business at the very top of their games, fighters who had so much to lose and to gain. Plus, the sport was smaller in the '80s than it was in the '50s and '60s. That made the impression left by Leonard-Hearns that much bigger.

Has there been anything close since? Oscar De La Hoya often has been compared to Leonard not only because of his charisma and moneymaking ability, but because he faced some of the same questions coming up that Leonard did before proving his mettle

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

Leonard donned sunglasses for the postfight press conference to hide his swollen right eye. Loser Hearns, however, appears relatively unmarked after the classic battle.

against Duran and then Hearns. When De La Hoya faced off with undefeated puncher Ike Quartey in February '99 for the WBC welterweight belt, the promoters tried to sell it as this generation's Leonard-Hearns. In terms of the action, it wasn't far off. But in scope, in magnitude, in electricity, it wasn't close.

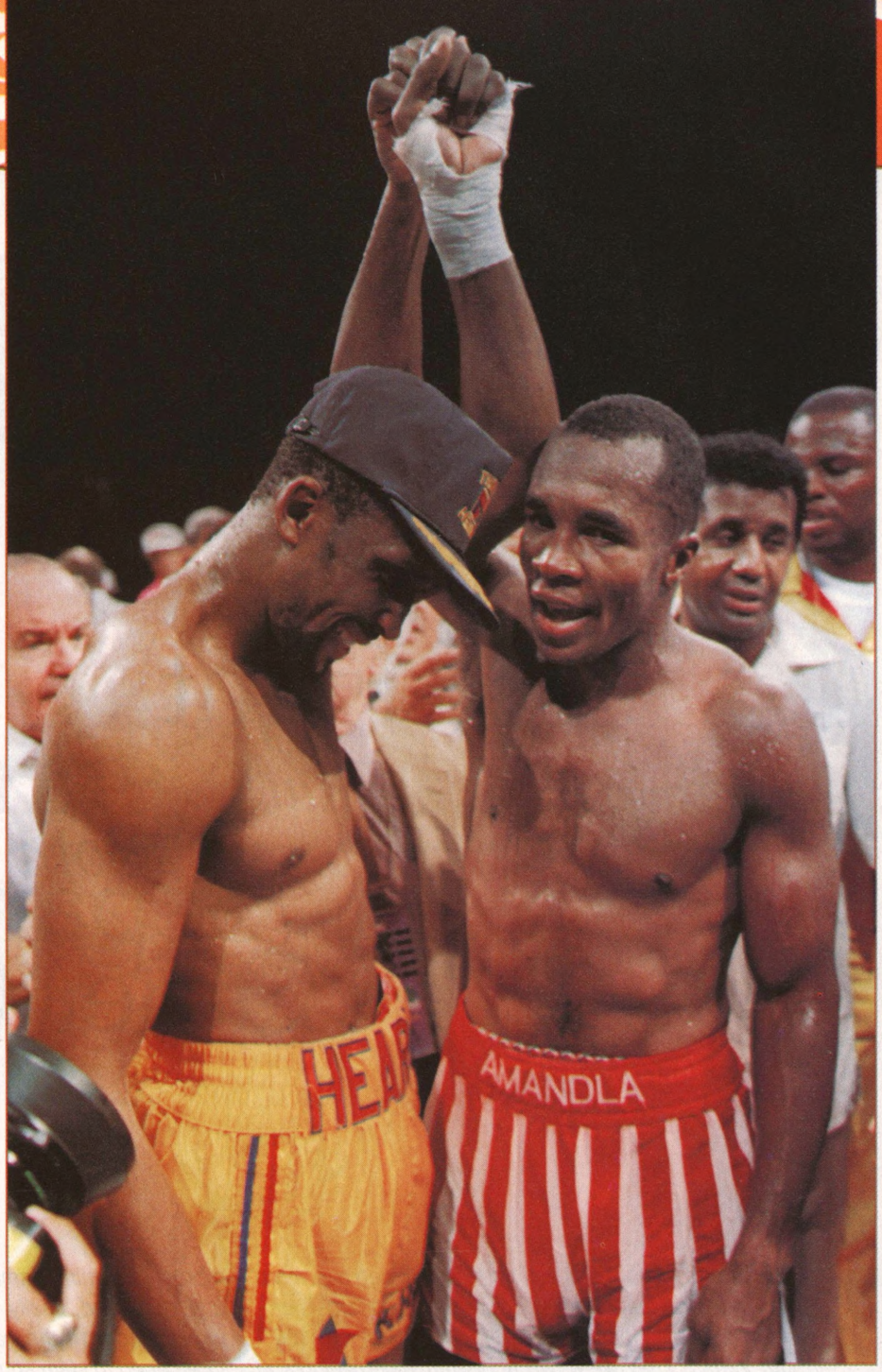
Of course, Leonard would go on to even bigger victories. His upset in 1987 of world middleweight champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler was one for the ages and one for the record books. There was, too, the rubber match win over Duran, the knockout of Don Lalonde, and the draw with Hearns in their criminally overdue rematch.

The source of that delay, reportedly, was Leonard's refusal to grant Hearns a rematch so long as Hearns disputed Davey Pearl's stoppage of their first fight. Did Hearns finally relent? Wise men have suggested that Leonard's eventual agreement to the return had to do more with Hearns' terrible showings in two prior fights: a third-round knockout loss to Iran Barkley and a gift decision over James Kinchen, who had Hearns all but knocked out early in their fight.

Eventually, Leonard's repeated comebacks became less inspired and moved ever closer toward embarrassment; the 1991 kayo loss to Terry Norris was painful to watch but forgivable, but the knockout loss six years later to 35-year-old Hector Camacho was such an abomination even to the 41-year old Leonard that it retired him for good. He was fortunate, though. All the good business he got done against Benitez, Hearns, Duran, and Hagler was so notable that his legacy could never be soiled by anything that came after. He could be stopped a hundred times by a hundred Hector Camachos, and we still would recall him as a fighting genius.

Hearns too achieved well after the loss to Leonard, with wins over Benitez and Duran, a memorable struggle against Hagler, and as many alphabet titles in as many weight classes as Leonard. The draw against Leonard in the rematch was really a win, even though he was on the verge of being stopped at the final bell. Most observers found the verdict a present for Leonard, who, even if he wasn't the fighter he was the first time, had retained all of his charisma. It was some consolation for Hearns, though clearly not enough. At this writing, he remains only semi-retired, at 47 years old.

That both fighters have had exceptional difficulty with retirement may be due to their exceptionally competitive nature, to an athleticism and talent that was born to them, or merely to the fact they are born prizefighters. Or, it may be that neither is able to fully leave behind the drama of that September evening in 1981, and both have spent the good part of their lives since chasing after it, chasing after the taste of it. Yes, that taste. You can hardly blame them. ■



Finally, in 1989, Hearns and Leonard fought a rematch. Although both were past their prime, it was another entertaining fight, with Hearns looking unlucky to only receive a draw after 12 give-and-take rounds.

Sugar Ray Leonard

"It Was A Fight That Defined Both Of Us And Separated Us From The Other Guys"

It's hard to think of a prizefight that unfolded at a more perfect time than the first Sugar Ray Leonard-Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns clash, on September 16, 1981, in Las Vegas. They were two unbeaten welterweights at their peak, each sharing a half of the world crown. For his build-up to the toughest test of his life, all Leonard did was knock out an undefeated future Hall of Famer in Wilfred Benitez and make boxing's ultimate macho man, Roberto Duran, surrender meekly. Hearns? He ended 30 of his 32 victories early, including a frightening two-round, two-punch destruction of Pipino Cuevas, a WBA titlist who'd made 11 successful defenses and had never before been down.

So ideal were the coming attractions and the stage setting that the production couldn't have possibly fulfilled expectations. Or could it? Well, Leonard and Hearns delivered a true classic that evening, 14 rounds of shifting momentum, mini-dramas, repeated tests of skill, stamina, and spirit, and, finally, a rally from an Olympic hero who was trailing on the cards and sporting a left eye that threatened to slam shut on him and his legend.

With the 25th anniversary of that remarkable night approaching, THE RING got Leonard to share his thoughts on that historic match, his feelings during battle, and what that night meant to his career and his life, all of it viewed from the perspective of a man 2½ decades removed from what might have been his defining moment.

*Busy these days with his work as a motivational speaker for, among other clients, **Fortune 500** companies, as well as his role as host of the second season of **The Contender**, Leonard is nonetheless never more than a fan's mention, a glance at a photo, or a flip of the TV remote button away from that night Hearns tried to close his eye and Sugar managed to open the mind of any critic who'd ever doubted him.*

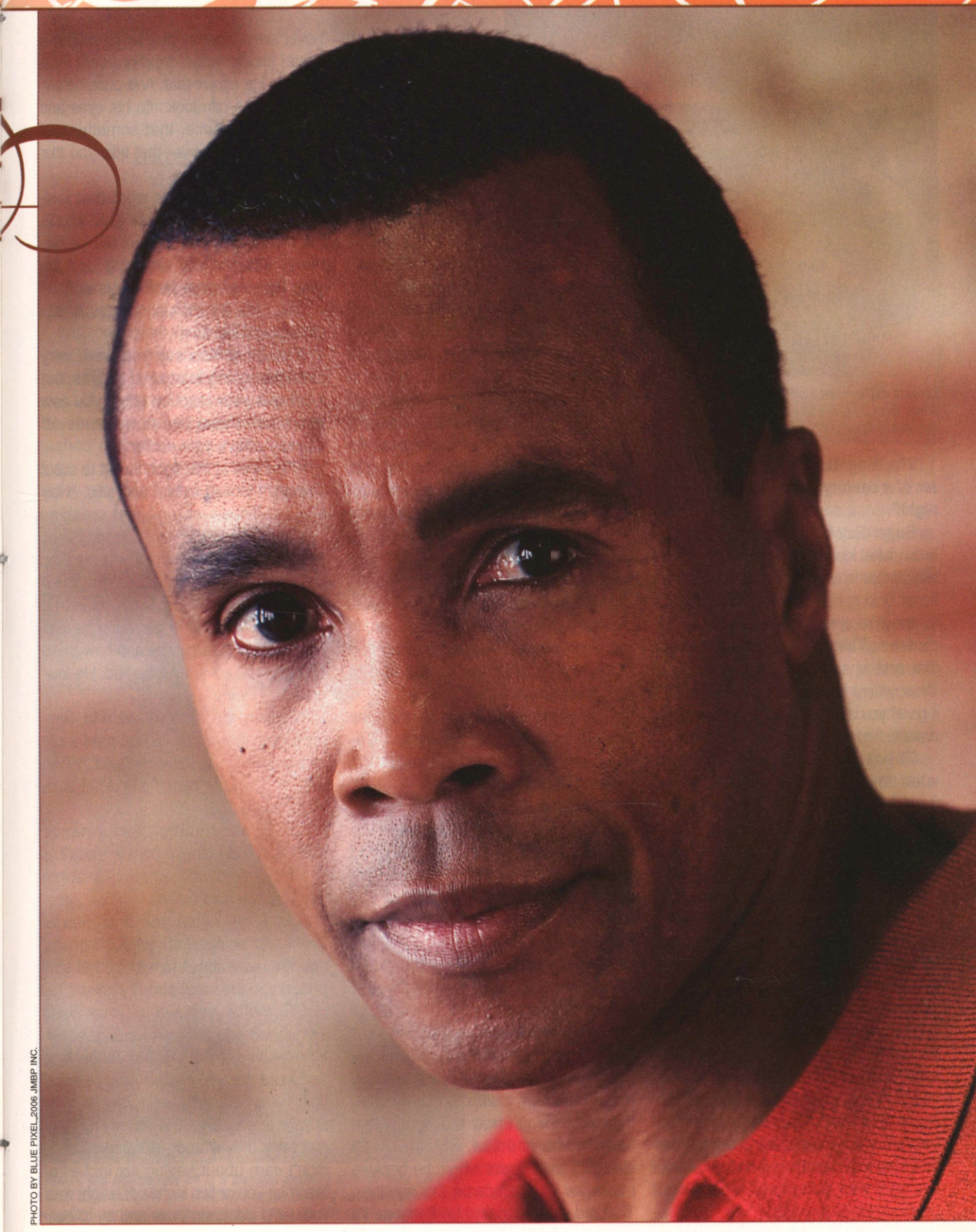


PHOTO BY BLUE PIXEL_2006 JMBP INC.

Leonard slams a left hook into Hearns' jaw during their classic 1981 showdown. Even though it was 25 years ago, Sugar Ray says he still recalls ever aspect and detail of the bout, thanks to a "photographic memory bank."

The Ring: When is the last time you sat down and watched a tape of it?

SRL: You're not going to believe this, man, but it was at Eddie Murphy's house a few weeks ago. Tommy and I were both there. We've become great friends. And Eddie's a major boxing fan with an incredible library of videotapes. So we're sitting there and Eddie puts on the first fight, in '81. We're watching it, sitting side by side, and it got very intense. Every now and then we'd glance at each other to see the other guy's reaction. Tommy kept saying, "Ray, stop running and start fighting," during those first couple of rounds when I was moving a great deal. All of a sudden, in the sixth round, I stopped moving and hurt him with a big left hook. I said to him, "Is that okay now?"

The Ring: Does it seem like *a quarter of a century* has passed since that night?

Sugar Ray Leonard: *(Chuckles)* You know, what kind of woke me up to the reality of that is when I went to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota for the 30th anniversary of the '76 Olympic team. Thirty years! Looking back at that, and when I fought Hearns, it's like, *Wow, where have those years gone?* But it gives you a different appreciation of the dreams and hopes that came to fruition.

The Ring: Where are you and what are you usually doing when your mind drifts back to that night at Caesars Palace?

SRL: It pops in my head every now and then when something reminds me of it. It can be something so abstract as the temperature, because I remember Vegas being hot. It's one of those nights that I recall so vividly. I can recollect the fight verbatim, round by round, how I felt and what was going through my mind. It's pretty amazing that I retained all that. Fighters do retain moments in fights and rounds, but it's like a photographic memory bank that I have of that entire fight. It was a fight that defined both of us and separated us from the other guys. No matter who won or lost, that fight was going to be symbolic of boxing in the '80s.

The Ring: Are you one of those people who believes Howard Cosell's call of that bout enhances the viewing experience?

SRL: Cosell's voice was like icing on the cake. Howard had such a presence in boxing. If he was calling a fight, it was the real deal. He had that voice, that personality, and that controversy that always followed him around, all things that added to the event.

The Ring: As you climbed through the ropes that night, what was your biggest concern?

SRL: I didn't have any concerns. I was so damn confident that I would beat Tommy. I knew it would be extremely tough, although I didn't know to what degree. I didn't know the fight would become ebb and flow, with the styles changing to the point where he became the boxer and I became the puncher. That didn't seem possible, because I'd never seen Tommy box anyone. But a fighter knows in the dressing room if it's his day. He *knows* that. And once he's in the ring, you can look into his eyes and see that presence, that something—I don't know what it is—that tells you that guy is ready.

The Ring: Describe what that feeling is like when it comes over you in the dressing room? Do you feel particularly sharp while warming up? Do your legs feel stronger than usual?

SRL: No. It's spiritual, mental. A psychological thing. Biorhythms.

The Ring: You say you were very confident going in against Hearns, but what was your reaction when you saw him crash those two right hands off Cuevas' chin a year earlier?

SR: I was at that fight. I went to scout Tommy. I looked at him and said, "Holy s___!" Those weren't just crashing blows. It was a total annihilation. Total dominance of an opponent who had the most awesome power. Cuevas broke guys' jaws and ribs. But I saw something in Cuevas' face. I saw fear when he realized how big Tommy was and how much of a physical advantage he had. He towered over Pipino.

Naturally, because we were in Tommy's hometown, the Detroit media put microphones in my face and said, "When are you going to fight Tommy?" I said, "Let's do it!"

The Ring: Hearns' performance that night didn't make you nervous?

SRL: It made me *aware*, truly aware that Tommy could punch.

The Ring: When you and Hearns eventually squared off, what surprised you the most about him and what surprised you the most about yourself?

SRL: What surprised me most about Tommy was his elusiveness as a boxer. If he would have used that all the time and used that height and reach advantage, he would have been very hard for anyone to ever beat. But Tommy had that mentality of a warrior, a kamikaze. He didn't care about having six inches of reach on you or five inches of height over you. He'd just go in there and try to beat

> "I pushed myself beyond limits. I went deep, deep, deep in that fight. Looking back years later, I see a transformation in that bout against Hearns, that inner resource being activated."

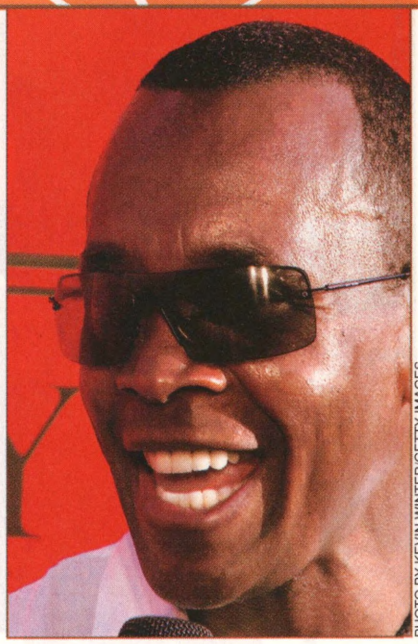


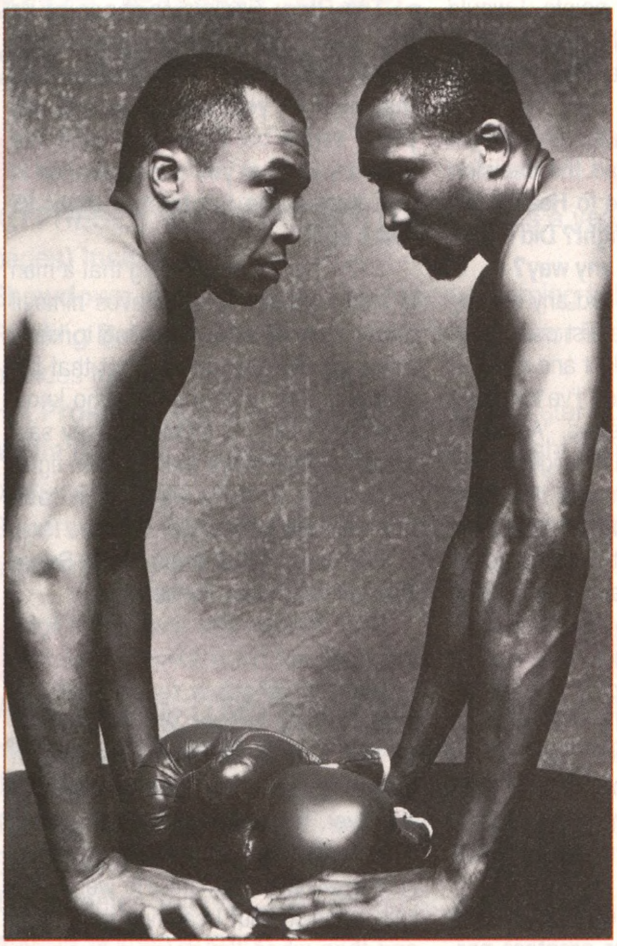
PHOTO BY KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

you up. That's why fight fans loved him. No matter who he fought, it was going to be a very exciting fight.

What surprised me about me ... you know, I never had to reach down that deep before. I was totally exhausted and spent. My arms and legs were gone. But I knew the fight was getting out of hand. I pushed myself beyond limits. I went deep, deep, deep in that fight. Looking back years later, I see a transformation in that bout against Hearns, that inner resource being activated.

The Ring: When your trainer, Angelo Dundee, uttered that famous line, "You're blowing it, son!" between the 12th and 13th rounds, were you thinking the same thing?

SRL: Yeah, fighters know when a fight is close or when we're losing. It's instinctive. But it took [Angelo] to kind of put things in perspective, tell me it's now or never. Then I went to work.



Leonard and Hearns face off in a preflight publicity shot for their 1989 rematch. Even though it was officially a draw, Leonard has told Hearns, with whom he's formed a friendship, that he thinks the "Hit Man" won the fight.

The Ring: How much was your vision affected by the swelling around your eye?

SRL: It was tender when he jabbed it, but it never bothered my vision. It was getting pretty bad, but I just continued to go. I never thought twice about it.

The Ring: When Hearns was doing his best boxing, when his jab was on target and you were having trouble getting inside, did you ever have any doubts about your chances?

SRL: I just kept pushing forward, kept pushing, kept pushing. I said to myself, *you know what? I'm tired of this s___. I'm exhausted. And if I'm that tired, he has to be just as tired as I am because he's the one moving.* You always feel that you're one punch away from turning it around. I kept going to his body and the punches hurt him and slowed him down, even in the middle rounds, when he was winning.

The Ring: In the 14th round, you hit him with a chopping right hand and threw your arms up over your head when he staggered. Did you know right then that the fight was over?

SRL: It was an overhand right. It was a grazing blow, but it hurt him. And Tommy had such big balls that he didn't want to go down. But I knew at that point that I had him because I was a pretty good finisher. If I hurt a guy, I could get him out of there. I had the arsenal to throw combinations even in the late rounds. I could always let my hands go.

The Ring: We heard you state years ago that you didn't think the detached retina you suffered was the result of that fight and Hearns' jabs. Do you still believe that?

SRL: I know fully well. I recall when I fought Macros Geraldo as a middleweight in 1979. That was when I first had the symptoms of what I know now was the gradual progression of a detached retina, because I saw three of him when he hit me.

The Ring: What would have hap-

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Leonard is reunited by old victims Marvin Hagler and Hearns in Las Vegas in 1995. Sugar Ray can't decide which victory he considers his best performance, but he rates both ahead of his "No Mas" victory over Roberto Duran.

pened if the Hearns fight had been scheduled for 12 rounds?

SRL: It's like the question they ask me about the Hagler fight: What would have happened if it was a 15-rounder? I would have still won because I would have adjusted to the distance. If I only had 12 rounds, I would have put more pressure on Tommy in the early rounds and done less testing of the waters.

The Ring: Do you have any negative memories of that night?

SRL: The only negative thing—unfortunate thing, I should say—is that after the fight, because I was so exhausted, I just went to sleep. Later, I heard that Richard Pryor and Burt Reynolds had come up to say congratulations, and I was too exhausted to say hi.

The Ring: That sure was an opportunity missed.

SRL: I know. Big time.

The Ring: How do you think your career would have unfolded if Hearns had continued jabbing and moving that night, you never caught him, and he won a close decision?

SRL: I think the public would have demanded a rematch, and I would have had a chance to counter that defeat. I was very technical and strategic in the ring, and I knew how to approach a fight. I attacked weak points. I would have figured him out the second time, whether it was being a little more aggressive or whatever.

The Ring: The rematch you fought in 1989 was a draw, but the decision could have easily gone to Hearns. Do you regret taking that fight? Did it diminish your win in '81 in any way?

SRL: I don't think it had any bearing on it. It didn't tarnish the first one. In the second fight, we were older and it was at a different point in our lives. I've told Tommy on numerous occasions, "As far as I'm concerned, you won that fight." What happened with that fight was that there was a general consensus that I'd win because Tommy was shot. He had looked bad in his last fight against James Kinchen. He rocked Tommy. Everyone in my camp figured, "One punch, Ray, and it's over." But for me, as a fighter, I've always been at my best when I'm challenged or the odds are against me. That's when I gear up. That was a meaningless fight that didn't drive me. I'm not making excuses, but Tommy was up for it. He was the man that night.

The Ring: Where does that first fight rate among your greatest performances?

SRL: Wow, that had to be number one. Marvin Hagler's right there too. Both fights had their intrigue. With Tommy, it was that he was so dominant as a champion. He knocked everybody out. For Hagler, it was that I'd had five years of inactivity, except for one fight against Kevin Howard that I don't even count, as I was coming back from a detached retina. Actually, I can't rate one over the other.

The Ring: Making the ultimate bully quit in New Orleans rates behind those two?

SRL: Yeah, that's behind them. I never really got credit for that fight. Everyone was always trying to find out the reason Duran quit, as opposed to saying that I made him quit.

The Ring: Explain to those of us who aren't Hall of Fame athletes what it feels like to live your life knowing that, even on your worst day, you can put a smile on your face with the memory of what you accomplished in Las Vegas one September night 25 years ago.

SRL: It's that old saying that a man is only as great as he proves himself to be. It's a wonderful feeling to know that's on my resume. I'm not that big of a guy, and when people who know how big Tommy is meet me, they say, "Wow!" It took more than a great fighter to beat Tommy Hearns. It took heart. It took balls.

The Ring: What does being Sugar Ray Leonard mean these days?

SRL: Certain fans and certain fighters may not have liked Sugar Ray Leonard for whatever reason, but one thing I have is respect. When they show my fight films on HBO or ESPN, I watch them. I go back and watch them over and over. It sounds crazy, but that person, Sugar Ray Leonard, the fighter, is no longer here anymore. He went on a long vacation. But I call him every now and then when I'm doing a business deal or I need him to help me keep my focus. We're still pretty close. ■

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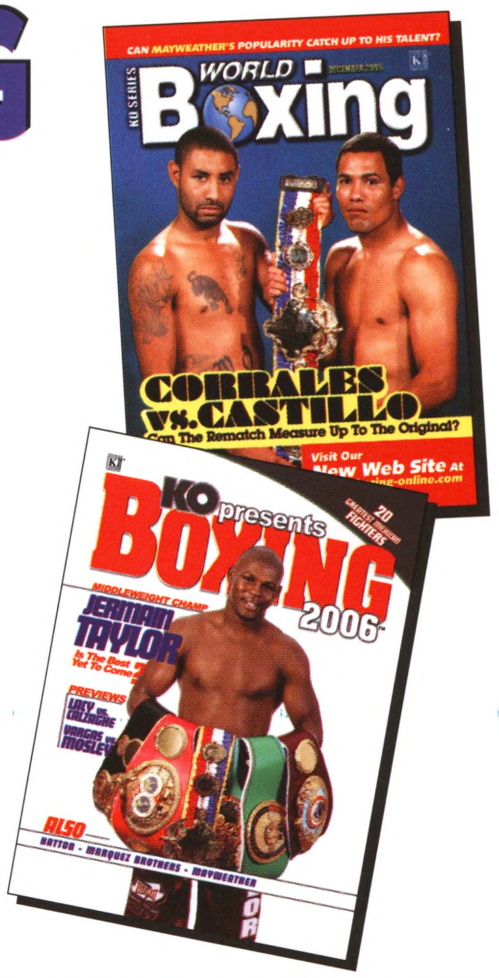

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